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ABSTRACT

In 1987, the Governor of Alaska's Interim Commission on Children and Youth was given two tasks: (1) to develop a plan for a first-class child care system for working parents statewide that is workable, fair and sensibly integrates with the public schools; and (2) to produce a comprehensive plan to combat the problems facing Alaskans so they are prepared to be economically self-sufficient. Offered in this report are the Commission's primary recommendations, child care recommendations, and recommendations concerning the problems of youth. Primary recommendations focus on parent education, life skills education, problem prevention, professional training, literacy education, program coordination, community interventions, youth leadership and social participation, school nursing and public health nursing services, school counseling, natural helpers/peer counseling, mental health minimum funding, children and family research, adolescent survey research, employment of qualified natives, rural services, juvenile diversion, background checks, and law enforcement. Child care recommendations concern program quality, affordability, accessibility, and parent support and training. Recommendations for intervention in the problems of youth concern family violence, teen suicide, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, runaway youth, and dropouts. Recommendations are accompanied by background information about the issue addressed. The concluding recommendation advocates the establishment of a permanent Commission on Children and Youth. (RH)

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Our Greatest Natural Resource

Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children

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A report of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth

PS 017294

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Our Greatest Natural Resource

Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children

A report of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth

January 1988

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STEVE COWPER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

January 19, 1988

Governor Steve Cowper
P.O. Box A
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor Cowper:

Six months ago, you formed the Interim Commission on Children and Youth and assigned us the following two tasks: to suggest a plan for a first-class, quality, affordable child care system for working parents throughout the state, and to suggest how we can help Alaska's children and youth overcome barriers to their economic self-sufficiency.

This report is the result of our work. It is both a testimony to how much can get done in so brief a time and how much must be left out to get anything done.

This report has a sense of urgency and hope--urgency from the facts and challenges of our children's lives and hope arising from the hundreds of dedicated Alaskans who contributed to the Commission's work. A broad constituency supports investing more in our children. You and your administration tapped that support in forming this Commission, and we saw that support demonstrated repeatedly in testimony from all areas of the state.

Our children will eventually have to rethink how they prepare their own children for the unknown demands of future generations. To help them do so, we today need to rethink how we invest in children, our greatest natural resource. We'll need to increase our commitment and our funding, and direct both to preventing problems early in life as well as doing better in treating problems children have as they get older.

There is much more to be done. These recommendations make a start, but they are just the beginning step in putting together a multi-year plan for investing in our children's future.

Your leadership has given Alaskans, so aware of our wealth in natural resources, the chance to show how we really care about the richest resource we have--our children. With your continued support, we can emerge as a model for the rest of the nation.

On behalf of the Interim Commission on Children and Youth, and all Alaskans, thank you for your commitment.

Peter Scales

Peter Scales, Ph.D.
Chair

Niesje J. Steinkruger

Niesje Steinkruger
Past Chair

OUR MISSION: WHY

Children are Alaska's human Permanent Fund. They belong to us all. We are all responsible for their care. Their care and nurturance now will pay a far greater economic and social dividend for this state's future than all of its other financial investments.

Every time three people gather in Alaska, one of them is probably a child. One-third of the state's population is under 18.

Children can't vote. They can't run for or hold public office. They can't be agency commissioners. They can't write local or state budgets. They can't hire or fire the people who care for and teach them. They are powerless; yet they are our future.

Children fail or flourish by the grace of the two-thirds of our population who can vote, run for and hold public office, be agency commissioners, write local and state budgets, and care for and teach them.

Every time three people gather in Alaska, one of them is probably a child. One-third of the state's population is under 18.

Children today are more likely than at any time over the last two generations to grow up in poverty and live some of their childhood with only one parent. They are likely to spend more time alone these days when not in school. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are likely to spend more time in the care of others than in the care of their parents. Quality, affordable child care is a basic need for many children, just like food and shelter. Our children are worth the needed investment. Our message to them must be that they are our highest priority.

Alaskans are facing difficult choices in making sure our children have these rights. The same as the rest of the country, we must face the new reality that today's children will be shortchanged and our desire for intergenerational equity frustrated unless we commit more investment to children's needs. The chart on page 3 shows how disproportionate Alaska's investments are in seniors and youth.

Principles Taken From the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Child:

Every Child has:

- The right to affection, love and understanding;
- The right to adequate nutrition and medical care;
- The right to a free education;
- The right to full opportunity for play and recreation;
- The right to a name and a nationality;
- The right to special care if handicapped;
- The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster;
- The right to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities;
- The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brother and sisterhood;
- The right to enjoy these rights regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national social origin.

Entitlements for an aging population, mostly indexed to inflation, have helped our elderly improve their lot so much so that seniors are now the least likely age group to be poor. The problem is, children have no such entitlements, and most programs that benefit children (such as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program) are not indexed to inflation. The result across the nation, and increasingly in Alaska, is that entitlements eat up a larger and larger part of a steadily shrinking economic pie. Unless we intervene through major policy shifts that preserve the economic stability of the old while increasing the economic opportunity of the young, we are risking a future where we cannot take care of our old in dignity because too many of the young are themselves so desperately in need of social welfare.

Our children and youth must have the early nurturing experiences, adequately met basic needs, and the academic and social supports that qualify them to become economically self-sufficient. They must not be defeated by the barriers caused by alcohol and drug abuse, emotional despair, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, grief over the loss of friends or family who have committed suicide, and the scars of family violence. We as a state, not government alone but an across-the-board partnership of public and private resources, need to bring down those barriers.

This Commission believes prevention pays economically, socially and spiritually.

Testimony this Commission received from young Alaskans sounded this steady theme: If we are to truly help young people help themselves, we have to follow through on what we start. Our young people have already seen too many well-intentioned new initiatives that are not sustained, too many broken promises. They need a generation of commitment.

We knew from the beginning that we would need a split vision. We had to look ahead to prevent problems from happening in the future, while at the same time we had to suggest how to strengthen care and education for today's children and youth.

The Commission reached consensus on a number of basic premises that emerged in discussions, guided us during spirited debates and formed a core of values for this report. They embody our philosophy.

We believe that:

- Parents are the first and most significant teachers and role models for their children.
- The best solutions strengthen families and support them in caring for themselves.
- Young people need to feel emotionally connected to their worlds to become happy, healthy, self-sufficient adults. They need love. They need hope. They need to succeed.
- Communities must create workable alternatives that reflect local values and cultural traditions. "Give me a fish and I eat for a day. Teach me to fish and I eat for a lifetime."
- We must invest our limited human and financial resources to prevent problems as well as treat them once they arise—prevention is cost effective and the only real alternative to band-aid approaches that are not working.

This Commission believes prevention pays economically, socially and spiritually. The way to prevent problems is to promote positives: strong, healthy families; adult role models for children and youth; opportunities for children and youth to help each other and exercise leadership in their communities; high quality, affordable early childhood programs; a broad variety of alternatives to substance abuse; and greater respect and appreciation for the rich diversity of cultural traditions that is part of what makes Alaska unique.

An old Chinese proverb says if you don't change your direction, you're bound to end up where you're headed. It's time to change direction. Instead of just saying children are our greatest natural resource, it's time we truly invested in their future.

General Fund Per Capita Expenditures for Youths and Seniors

YOUTH

	FY 86 (Actual)	FY 87 (Revised)	FY 88 (Governor)	FY 88 (Appropriation)
Total	$119,300,400	$110,407,400	$108,329,000	$113,008,000
Population*	169,269	167,115	166,580	166,580
Per Capita	$705	$661	$650	$678

SENIORS

	FY 86 (Actual)	FY 87 (Revised)	FY 88 (Governor)	FY 88 (Appropriation)
Total	$93,845,100	$96,514,200	$72,786,000	$103,123,900
Population*	19,417	20,632	21,923	21,923
Per Capita	$4,833	$4,678	$3,320	$4,704

*Population is from Alaska Department of Labor, 1988 mid-level projections. Prepared by the House Research Agency, July 1987. This table does not include per capita expenditures for regular education grades K-12. State funding for education is between $2,700 and $3,000 per capita annually for FY 86-88. Because education is constitutionally guaranteed and provided to all citizens during their youth, these data were not included. If funding for education of youth were included, youth expenditures would be about 60 percent of senior expenditures in FY 88.

OUR MISSION: WHAT

Governor Steve Cowper and the bipartisan Children's Caucus of the 15th Alaska Legislature recognized the need to place children higher on our public policy agenda. Governor Cowper appointed 22 public representatives, legislators and state officials to the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth.

Governor Cowper charged this Commission with two tasks: 1. to develop a plan for a first-class child care system for working parents statewide that is workable, fair and sensibly integrates with the public schools; and 2. to produce a comprehensive plan to combat the problems facing Alaskans so they are prepared to be economically self-sufficient.

We considered the Governor's two-fold charge daunting, calling on us to rethink and remodel the state's public policy toward young people. We have produced recommendations we hope will promote a future Alaska whose population is healthier, happier and self-sufficient.

Economics is a thread throughout our concerns and recommendations. Alaska's economy is based on the highest percentage of working parents among the 50 states, along with a unique mix of cash and subsistence economies. We considered what parents who receive child care assistance needed to make it possible to support their families and provide nurturing parenting, regardless of the economy in which they work—whether they work in an all-night restaurant, in a busy office, or follow nature through the traditional rhythms of hunting, fishing and trapping. All these parents are working parents.

This report has a sense of urgency and hope—urgency from the facts and challenges of our children's lives and hope arising from the hundreds of dedicated Alaskans who contributed to the Commission's work.

The information we considered has been rich. We have talked with parents, young children, youth, elders, community leaders and business people. We have benefited heavily from the knowledge of provider organizations, advocacy groups, academics and government officials.

This report is not a needs assessment. In his charge to the Commission, Governor Cowper made clear what many concerned Alaskans have known for some time: We know what the problems are to a large degree; now we need to know how to prevent them from happening and what to do to lessen their impact when they do.

In keeping with that spirit, this report devotes less attention to describing problems and more to recommending solutions.

The report reflects only six months of work. Because of that, it is both a testimony to how much can get done in so brief a time, and how much must be left out to get anything done.

Most of the first two months of the Commission's work were spent on the following tasks:

- identifying all the possible important issues to cover;
- identifying models of positive programs, policies and legislation around Alaska and across the country;
- collecting and analyzing numerous previous reports and recommendations from Alaska and Outside.

We identified through research and public comment more than 200 issues which at one point or another were considered for further analysis.

In the third and fourth months, we narrowed the issues to a more manageable number. A significant limitation of this first report is that some clearly important issues could not be

addressed in six months but must await another phase of the Commission's work. Three of these critical issues—children in poverty, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and how best to support parents who "work" by staying home to raise their children—are discussed briefly at the end of this report.

The Commission recognizes that without action to address issues like these more systematically the recommendations we present will have limited impact.

Instead of just saying children are our greatest natural resource, it's time we truly invested in their future.

We heard public comment via statewide teleconference at each of the five full Commission meetings, at many subcommittee meetings, and at a special three-day statewide teleconference. In all, nearly 400 people testified in person or submitted written remarks. In addition, many Commissioners visited child care and youth programs in different parts of the state, either on their own initiative or by invitation. We participated in the Governor's Youth Safety Conference and talked to many young people from around the state. We talked with children from several child care programs. We were privileged to meet with 450 youth and elders at the Alaska Federation of Natives annual conference to learn how they saw the future for Alaska's Native children and youth. We sent two issues of an informational newsletter to a statewide mailing list of more than 800 interested Alaskans and groups and invited scores of individuals representing particular groups or positions to testify to ensure their comment.

A small number of experienced Alaskans active in serving children and youth reviewed the draft recommendations. The Commission approved the draft recommendations which were available for an additional month of public comment. Revisions based on public comment were incorporated and the Commission approved this final version for the Governor.

The recommendations we've made are not panaceas. They cannot be accomplished overnight. They represent a start on a comprehensive system that nurtures children's self-esteem while supporting their parents. We begin with "Primary Recommendations" that provide the foundation for the subsequent recommendations on child care and youth issues, which while numbered in sequence are not presented in any priority order. We need a generation of commitment to these priorities, not just a year or a term in office.

The first Alaska teenagers of the 21st century were born in 1987, the first year of the Commission's work. These recommendations could well be the first steps that will help us dedicate the 1990s as the Decade of the Alaskan Child.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Invest in Parenting and Family Strengths: 1
The State of Alaska should help parents learn the skills they need to create a nurturing and safe life for all children. *Page 15*

Life Skills Education: 2
The State Board of Education should require all school districts to offer skills for living integrated into the curriculum for grades K-12, and require at least a semester-long parenting and child development course in senior high school. *Page 16*

Problem Prevention: 3
State children and youth grant programs should ensure that a minimum of between 5% and 15% of available funding is used to prevent problems. *Page 17*

Training: 4
Additional training is essential for adults who make decisions about or interact with children or youth in a licensed or professional capacity. *Page 18*

Increase Literacy: 5
Efforts to increase literacy and effectiveness of communication should be expanded, including additional support for adult basic literacy programs and statewide programs to increase youth literacy. *Page 19*

Coordination: 6
State, local and multidisciplinary coordinating groups should be created and/or continued to assess problems and needs, identify priorities, develop solutions and encourage use of community members in problem solving. *Page 19*

Community Activities: 7
Communities should enlist their youth to help develop social, recreational and community service programs to serve as alternatives to boredom and substance abuse. *Page 20*

Youth Leadership and Participation: 8
School districts should significantly expand elective credit opportunities for student community service. *Page 20*

School Nursing and Public Health Nursing Services: 9
School districts and the departments of Education, and Health and Social Services should support and provide funds to maintain and expand basic school and public health nursing programs in rural and urban areas. Incentives should be offered to encourage school districts that do not have health services to institute them. *Page 21*

School Counseling: 10
Initiate and expand school counseling programs in grades K-12, especially at the elementary school level. *Page 22*

Natural Helpers/Peer Counseling: 11
Programs that use students as natural helpers to teach and help other students should be expanded and funded in grades K-12. *Page 22*

Mental Health Minimum Funding: 12
The Mental Health Board and the Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that at least 33 percent of funds expected from the Mental Health Lands Act settlement are allocated to services for children and youth. *Page 23*

Children and Family Research: 13
The state should provide funds to conduct, analyze and disseminate research relevant to Alaska's children and families. *Page 23*

Adolescent Survey: 14
State agencies should be funded to survey jointly a representative sample of Alaska's youth to provide baseline data on a wide range of health, education and social issues for purposes of comprehensive planning, specific program design and evaluation of resource allocation effectiveness. *Page 24*

Hire Qualified Natives: 15
Schools and human services agencies serving Native children, youth and families should hire qualified Natives as service providers to children. *Page 24*

Rural Services: 16
Rural areas should receive state assistance to develop a rural services task force to explore and establish community development programs that jointly address social, spiritual and economic needs. *Page 25*

Juvenile Diversion: 17
The Division of Family and Youth Services together with the judicial system should again fund and expand a juvenile diversion program as an alternative to the traditional, punitive juvenile justice system. *Page 26*

Background Checks: 18
A statewide system that provides employers with the criminal history of all personnel working directly with or supervising children should be developed. To assure that all sexual assault convictions remain on the record, criminal sentencing laws should be amended to prohibit suspended imposition of sentences for individuals convicted of sexual assault. *Page 26*

Law Enforcement: 19
More law enforcement personnel are needed in many areas of the state to enforce existing laws against violence and substance use. Law enforcement personnel should be trained in substance abuse, family violence and cultural awareness. *Page 27*

CHILD CARE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY

Salaries/Child Care Grant Program: 20
Child Care Grant Program funds should be increased to the statutory maximum of $50 per full-time child per month to provide additional resources for such purposes as increased staff salaries and professional training. *Page 32*

High Quality Standards: 21
The state should provide grant funds to enable early childhood programs to become accredited through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs and should financially assist programs that continue to meet academy standards. *Page 33*

Specialized Training: 22
Specialized training at local, regional and state levels is needed for early childhood educators and family home care providers. *Page 34*

Quality infant care: 23
The state should pay up to one-half the program's cost of care for infants when programs meet high standards. The departments of Community and Regional Affairs, Health and Social Services, and Education should develop a Criteria for Excellence for infant and toddler care to define those quality standards. *Page 34*

Primary Grade Ratios: **24**
The State Board of Education should adopt a policy urging a maximum of 20 children per teacher in kindergarten through grade 3. The state should help fund local district efforts to meet that ratio. *Page 35*

1. QUALITY: *Well-Trained Staff*

Education and Training: **25**
Education and Training Grant funds from the Department of Community and Regional Affairs should be increased so eligible programs, organizations and communities can offer developmentally appropriate early childhood education/training and scholarships for courses and other professional development. *Page 36*

Career Ladder: **26**
The University of Alaska and the Department of Education should develop an early childhood career ladder. *Page 37*

1. QUALITY: *Culture*

Local Hire: **27**
More early childhood educators and family child care providers from Alaska's diverse cultures must be recruited, trained and hired in local communities. *Page 39*

Awareness Training: **28**
Child care providers, educators and administrators, should be trained to heighten their awareness of cultural differences and improve their ability to resolve issues in a culturally appropriate manner. *Page 40*

Assess in Primary Language: **29**
Screening and assessment of young children to determine developmental readiness for learning should be done in the child's primary language. *Page 40*

Culturally Appropriate Materials: **30**
Curriculum and materials culturally appropriate for Alaska should be available to all early childhood programs through the state library and other services. *Page 41*

1. QUALITY: *Health*

Child Care Revolving Loan Fund: **31**
Alaska should reinstate the low interest Child Care Revolving Loan Fund, increase its previous level of funding and simplify the required paperwork. *Page 42*

Comprehensive Health Screening: **32**
Comprehensive health screenings should be guaranteed to all Alaska's infants, toddlers, preschoolers and students to identify problems as soon as possible to prevent more expensive treatment later. *Page 42*

Respite Care and Therapeutic Services: **33**
The state and local communities should fund low-cost respite care for families who need child care relief for brief periods of time. Therapeutic services for young children with special needs and their families should also be supported by the state and local communities. *Page 43*

1. QUALITY: *Regulations*

Basic Regulations: **34**

One standard set of basic child care regulations for all Alaska's children in early childhood programs should be used. The Commission recommends that all child care and preschool programs serving children from birth to age 8 be called Early Childhood Programs to build a community among providers and educators and to heighten public awareness of our common commitment to quality care for all children regardless of the number of hours in care. *Page 45*

Licensing/Technical Assistance: **35**

The Department of Health and Social Services must fund adequate numbers of trained staff whose primary responsibility is to license homes and centers. *Page 46*

Interagency Coordination: **36**

Cooperation and planning among the six state agencies involved with early childhood education and child care is essential. *Page 47*

Anchorage Licensing: **37**

The Municipality of Anchorage, which is scheduled to assume licensing responsibilities for child care center programs there, should work closely with the Department of Health and Social Services to enforce common standards and promote high quality programs. *Page 48*

2. AFFORDABILITY

Day Care Assistance Program: **38**

The state should increase funding for the Day Care Assistance Program to serve more families and expand eligibility. *Page 53*

Facilities: **39**

Buildings not fully used should be made available for child care, including churches, schools, state office and municipal buildings, and vacant buildings held by state agencies such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. *Page 54*

Flexible Personnel Policies: **40**

All employers, public and private, should adopt flexible personnel policies that meet the needs of parents and families. *Page 54*

State as a Model Employer: **41**

The state should develop a Model Employer Plan. *Page 55*

Optional Child Care Benefits: **42**

The state should make child care an optional benefit for state employees through the Supplemental Benefits System. *Page 55*

Employer-Sponsored Child Care: **43**

The state should launch a new public/private initiative on employer-sponsored child care. *Page 56*

Municipal Child Care: **44**

Local decision makers, including planners, zoning boards and developers, should be encouraged to investigate successful models elsewhere that set aside space for child care in public facilities. *Page 56*

3. ACCESSIBILITY

Resource and Referral Agencies: **45**

A statewide system of resource and referral centers to help parents find accessible, affordable, quality child care should be funded jointly by the state, local businesses, school districts and other agencies. *Page 57*

Family Child Care Providers: **46**
Resource and referral agencies should receive incentive grants to recruit, initially train and help develop a continuing training program for family child care providers. *Page 58*

Range of Care: **47**
A full range of child care services must be made available for parents needing out-of-home care for their children. *Page 59*

School-age Child Care: **48**
A network of affordable care programs for school-age children should be developed throughout the state. Community Schools funding should be reinstated to coordinate school-age care. *Page 60*

Head Start: **49**
The state should make Head Start services available to all of Alaska's eligible children and their families. *Page 61*

4. PARENT SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Parent Support: **50**
Alaska should adopt and fund a comprehensive parent support and training program. *Page 62*

Media Campaign: **51**
Audio, video and print media should be encouraged to deliver more parenting advice and skills to their audiences. *Page 64*

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Victims of Family Violence: **52**
Increased resources should be made available to protect, support and treat children who are victims of physical or sexual abuse, or neglect. *Page 68*

Witnesses to Family Violence: **53**
Increased crisis intervention and aftercare services of greater variety should be made available for children and youth who live in violent homes. Judges should thoroughly consider the impact of violence in the home on children and youth when deciding custody disputes. *Page 69*

Children's Trust Fund: **54**
A children's trust fund should be established and administered by a board that seeks new funding for child abuse and neglect prevention programs. *Page 70*

Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force: **55**
A statewide Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force should be established to design a plan to provide services for youth identified as sex offenders or at risk of becoming offenders. *Page 70*

Corporal Punishment: **56**
The Alaska State Board of Education should ban corporal punishment in the schools and early childhood programs and offer training in positive, non-physical methods of discipline. *Page 71*

Child Protection System: **57**
The Governor should charge this or a new Commission with an in-depth analysis of how the existing child protection system can be improved. *Page 72*

TEEN SUICIDE

Community Plan: **58**
Every community should create a plan to address problems that lead its young people to despair. *Page 73*

Prevention Education: **59**
Adults who work with children and youth must be taught to recognize the early warning signs of depression and youth at risk for suicide and to act to obtain help. *Page 74*

Suicide Prevention Counseling: **60**
Basic counseling services need to be available in all Alaska communities to help prevent suicide. *Page 75*

Suicide Research: **61**
The state should support research to determine what factors account for the dramatic variation in village alcohol-related accident and suicide rates. *Page 76*

Emotional Disaster Response Team: **62**
The Department of Health and Social Services should be funded to stimulate the development of state and regional crisis teams that will be mobilized to assist communities to provide emergency and follow-up counseling services when one or more suicides constitute a catastrophic event. *Page 76*

Families and Friends: **63**
Community mental health centers and rural crisis response teams should develop plans for assisting families and friends of suicide victims and distribute information about self-help groups to them. *Page 77*

Care for Suicidal Youth: **64**
Communities should actively take a role in caring for their suicidal youth, including use of appropriate secure placements and holding commitment hearings in the community where possible. *Page 77*

Mental Health and Alcoholism: **65**
The Department of Health and Social Services should make it a priority to design its services to reflect the fact that alcohol-related and other substance abuse accidental deaths and suicides share many common causes. *Page 78*

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance Abuse Prevention: **66**
The State Board of Education and local school districts should cooperate with other agencies to expand funding for programs in grades K-12 to prevent substance abuse. *Page 80*

Substance Abuse Treatment Range: **67**
More funds are needed to expand support groups, outpatient treatment, and a variety of residential treatment options for young substance abusers. *Page 80*

Treatment for Children of Abusers: **68**
More grant money is needed to educate and treat children of alcoholics and other substance abusers and dysfunctional families through schools, expanded outpatient treatment centers, support groups and camps for children of alcoholics. *Page 81*

Substance Law Enforcement: **69**
Greater state and local resources and greater emphasis need to be directed to enforcing laws that prohibit selling and providing alcohol, drugs and tobacco to minors. *Page 81*

Withholding Privileges: **70**
Alaska should enact legislation that more effectively discourages substance use by withholding or delaying youth privileges such as driver's licenses. *Page 82*

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: 71
Agencies involved in delivering substance abuse services should guarantee voluntary residential treatment programs for pregnant women who choose an alternative to drinking during pregnancy. *Page 82*

TEEN PREGNANCY

Adolescent Health Clinics: 72
The departments of Health and Social Services and Education should jointly fund and monitor a program of pilot comprehensive adolescent health clinics in schools. *Page 84*

Teenage Prenatal Care: 73
Comprehensive prenatal care programs for teenagers and low income women should be created and funded through expanded Medicaid coverage options allowed under SOBRA. *Page 85*

Child Care for Teenage Parents: 74
Child care and other supports for teenage parents should be provided to enable them to stay in school. *Page 86*

Sex Education and Family Planning Services: 75
Education about sexuality should be more widely available to teenagers, as should family planning counseling and services to help prevent pregnancy. *Page 86*

RUNAWAY YOUTH

Comprehensive Runaway Program: 76
A new comprehensive program should be developed to serve runaways, throwaways and their families. *Page 88*

Family Counseling: 77
Resources should be made available to existing community and state agencies and the private sector to increase youth and family counseling and education services provided to families in divorce, single parents and stepfamilies. *Page 88*

Shelter, Emancipation and Independent Living Programs: 78
A broader variety of shelter programs offering brief to long stays should be funded for runaways and throwaways who are not delinquent or in state custody. The Legislature should define the criteria for emancipation of minors. The state and licensed agencies need more funds and changes in the law to allow them to place youth in independent living programs. *Page 89*

Reunited Families: 79
Programs should be funded to help families reunited with a runaway or throwaway child after the reunion, particularly to counsel other children in the family. *Page 90*

DROPOUTS

Defining Children at Risk of Dropping Out: 80
The State Board of Education should define "children at risk of dropping out of school" and establish minimum standards to help them. *Page 92*

Alternative Education Programs: 81
The Legislature should offer financial and other incentives to districts that develop a variety of alternative education programs for students, especially at the elementary level, likely to drop out, as well as re-entry programs for those who have already dropped out. *Page 92*

Uniform Dropout Definition: **82**

Uniform definition and reporting standards should be developed and monitored so that dropout statistics are comparable across the state. *Page 93*

Truancy and Suspension: **83**

School districts should create local working groups to review truancy and suspension policies. *Page 93*

Multicultural Experiences: **84**

Schools should provide more multicultural experiences so students will appreciate their own and other cultures. Elders should more frequently be asked to teach Native languages, survival skills, crafts and history in schools. *Page 94*

BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Permanent Commission: **85**

The Legislature should establish a permanent Commission on Children and Youth to advocate for continuing support for Alaska's children and youth and to address many other issues we did not cover. *Page 100*

Primary Recommendations

These general recommendations apply to, and form the foundations of, the specific recommendations in the sections on child care and youth issues.

Invest in Parenting and Family Strengths: 1

Inadequate parenting skills are at the heart of many youth problems. Too few parents are reached with existing parenting education programs and little encourages them to use the few available opportunities. Knowing how to parent well is the foundation for responding well to children's needs and sets the stage for children's development of self-esteem, connections with others and resourcefulness. Support for parents to learn good parenting is the single greatest investment Alaska can make in strong families. *(See Recommendation 50, page 62.)*

Support for parents to learn good parenting is the single greatest investment Alaska can make in strong families.

The State of Alaska should help parents learn the skills they need to create a nurturing and safe life for all children by offering incentives such as stipends, free child care, transportation and release time for parents who participate in and people who offer parent education and training.

Media public service announcements should promote these classes and support groups. Classes should include but not be limited to the following:

a. education, especially about substance abuse, nutrition and their effects on pregnancy;

b. support/education groups for new parents and parents of young children;

c. instruction about the developmental stages of childhood and adolescence, the psychological, social and physical needs of children throughout growth and the range of children's individual differences;

d. life skills, substance abuse and sexually transmitted disease education for parents;

e. programs for parents of children with special needs.

Life Skills Education: 2

A junior at Nelson Island High School asked: "Does school prepare us for life?" Preparing youth for life is everybody's business, but schools have a special role. An Arctic Slope elder observed that "the best survival kit a person has is their mind." All community resources help create this survival kit, especially the schools.

Young people's health and ability to stay healthy affect how well they learn in or out of school. As young people grow, the degree to which they have mastered life skills, such as knowing how to make friends and resist peer pressure, the difference between normal "blues" and serious depression, ways of being "naturally high," how to resolve conflicts with parents and others, can determine whether they become casualties or take advantage of their opportunities. Educating the whole child means that life skills are as basic as language or math.

Parenting courses are now taught in some of Alaska's 55 school districts, and a curriculum that integrates skills for living within a critical thinking approach is not available anywhere. Yet it is clear that the ability to make good life decisions and future plans, resist peer pressure, learn new skills for adapting to changing job markets and understand the demands and qualities of successful parenting are among the most important new basics in our children's education. They are the basics of the future, no less important than the traditional three R's.

The Department of Education can develop a sequence of model curriculums that help enhance students' self-concept, critical thinking, coping and decision-making and refusal skills. Specific topics should include but not be limited to the following: parenting, commu-

(Continued on Page 17)

The State Board of Education should require all school districts to offer skills for living integrated into the curriculum for grades K-12, and require at least a semester-long parenting and child development course in senior high school.

"Encourage exceptions to the rule."

—Claudette Amadon, grandmother

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nication and decision making, self-concept building, family violence, education about sexuality, gender roles and sex stereotyping, sexually transmissible diseases and AIDS, prevention of date rape, sexual abuse and substance abuse, dealing with family dissolution, dealing with grief and similar topics. The focus of this K-12 curriculum should be on wellness and prevention. Preparation at the secondary level should also include job application skills such as resume preparation, job interviewing, and how to be a responsible, dependable worker. The state should provide incentives for teaching excellence in life skills and employ a talent bank of master teachers to provide training school districts will need for excellent programs.

A junior at Nelson Island High School asked: "Does school prepare us for life?"

Problem Prevention: 3

Numerous studies have shown that prevention is cheaper than cure. Studies in a report from the U.S. House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families showed savings from $3 to $10 in cure costs for every dollar spent on prevention. When revenues are scarce, however, dollars tend to be appropriated first to treat those already in crisis. The National Governors' Association has called for spending at least 5% of a state's total resources on preventing dropouts, suicide, runaways, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and family violence. The National Mental Health Association sets the minimum at 15%.

State children and youth grant programs should ensure that a minimum of between 5% and 15% of available funding is used to prevent problems. Money must not be moved from essential treatment to fund prevention. Prevention should be viewed as a longer term investment that recoups its initial cost many times over.

Prevention is cheaper than cure. Studies show savings from $3 to $10 in cure costs for every dollar spent on prevention.

Training: 4

Many adults influence and make decisions about a child's life beyond the child's family: early childhood personnel and administrators, educators, physical and mental health professionals, social workers, human service providers, juvenile justice personnel, law enforcement officials, judges and court personnel, crisis intervention personnel, foster parents and licensing personnel. People working in one specialty area increasingly need to know about other issues. For instance, children abusing alcohol have a high risk of suicide. Suicide prevention and substance abuse prevention specialists need to know more of each other's specialties. Help must be provided for all problems so the child can develop into a healthy adult. All people who work with children should know about children and how their problems interrelate as well as how to refer them to the agencies that can provide services.

A consistent theme throughout testimony from Alaska's youth, regardless of their culture, was their need and desire for appropriate nurturing and role models from the adults in their lives.

Witnesses shared numerous professional and personal experiences in which law enforcement officials, health care practitioners, juvenile justice personnel, social workers and educators made decisions that had significant impact on the individuals and their families without appropriate understanding of critical issues of development or cultural factors. Professionals testified about incidents within their own families in which problems were not properly identified by other professionals charged with intervention.

The overwhelming weight of this testimony suggests that key adults in a broad range of positions basic to the lives of children and youth lack critical training.

Additional training is essential for adults who make decisions about or interact with children or youth in a licensed or professional capacity. This training should be required before and during employment, be available statewide and should include the following areas:

a. the identification of children who are at risk as a result of substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, suicide or witnessing violence in their homes and how to appropriately intervene and refer them;

b. an understanding of child and adolescent growth and development, culturally diverse behavior, death and dying, grief and loss, impacts and special needs of families with chronic illness or disability.

Increase Literacy: 5

Youth and adults who are functionally literate have a greater chance of employment. That alone benefits children. Young people with poor reading, writing and speaking skills have been found to be three to five times more likely to become teen parents than more literate teens. Adults who actively read and write serve as role models for children. An adult learning to read and write communicates powerfully the value of literacy. Basic literacy is the cornerstone of future economic opportunities for children and adults. Programs such as the Alaska State Writing Consortium have increased the amount and fluency of student writing and students' satisfaction and willingness to write. While the efforts of the Alaska library system and others have done much to promote literacy, more attention would increase the communication skills of all Alaskans.

Efforts to increase literacy and effectiveness of communication should be expanded, including additional support for adult basic literacy programs and statewide programs to increase youth literacy.

Basic literacy is the cornerstone of future economic opportunities for children and adults.

Coordination: 6

Strict boundaries between agencies have not produced an effective system of children and youth services. Children's needs extend beyond what one agency can provide and the limited scope in which funding is often awarded. Cooperation across agency lines and involving youth in shaping programs that affect them have produced successful programs and improved services and advocacy for children through the Arctic Alliance for People, the Fairbanks Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, the Anchorage Child Advocacy Network and other organizations. Cooperative efforts must be encouraged to ensure that valuable human and financial resources are not fragmented and that individual agency programs do not duplicate other programs but rather form a range of care for our communities.

State, local and multidisciplinary coordinating groups should be created and/or continued to assess problems and needs, identify priorities, develop solutions and encourage use of community members in problem solving. These coordinating groups should receive technical assistance and support from state government.

Children's needs extend beyond what one agency can provide and the limited scope in which funding is often awarded.

Community Activities: 7

Youth at high risk for a variety of problems tend to be the least involved in extracurricular activities. In addition, thousands of children between the ages of 5 and 14 are home alone each day after school. The absence of either supervision or constructive activity can lead to high risk behavior. Young people repeatedly described to the Commission the lack of wholesome community activities as a contributor to boredom, substance abuse, low self-esteem and suicide. More widespread after-school recreational programs would respond to all these needs, reduce high risk behavior and contribute to healthier children and youth.

Communities should enlist their youth to help develop social, recreational and community service programs to serve as alternatives to boredom and substance abuse.

These activities should include teen activity centers with minimal admission costs, more gym nights, organized sports including non-competitive opportunities, skating rinks, winter and summer survival camps, camping trips with elders, church youth programs, performing arts, culture clubs where youth can learn traditional dances, carving, storytelling, unstructured learning experiences such as using libraries and museums and other similar activities.

Youth Leadership and Participation: 8

Offering graduation credit for community service is suggested by blue-ribbon panels such as the National Governors' Association in its report "Bringing Down the Barriers." In some communities, young people plan and lead community work, not just contribute to it. The benefit of volunteer service to youth can be seen in a St. Louis program where teenagers who volunteered weekly at community agencies and also had life skills courses were less likely to get pregnant or fail schoolwork compared to teens not in the program.

Many schools offer work credit for paid employment. This program could be expanded to include unpaid volunteer work. Organizations like the Alaska Association of Student Leaders, which provides an opportunity for our youth to develop their leadership skills, should be encouraged.

Youth repeatedly testified to the Commission about their desire to participate more in meaningful ways in their communities' decision making. Facilitating their involvement would invest in their individual feelings of worth and their ability to contribute productively to Alaska.

School districts should significantly expand elective credit opportunities for student community service.

Youth should receive credit for working with non-profit agencies, government, village and community councils, Native organizations and corporations, and other decision-making bodies and organizations like the Alaska Association of Student Leaders. More opportunities should be funded for leadership training.

Youth repeatedly testified to the Commission about their desire to participate more in meaningful ways in their communities' decision making.

School Nursing and Public Health Nursing Services: 9

Many children in Alaska have some source of health care. However, the marginally poor who do not qualify for assistance, those without insurance, and children of working parents who cannot afford to miss work or have no transportation have difficulty obtaining accessible, affordable health care. The only health professional some children have access to may be the school nurse or public health nurse in rural areas.

Nurses provide cost effective health assessment, illness and problem identification, crisis intervention, referrals, ongoing monitoring and health counseling. In addition, these nurses provide individualized instruction and related health support services as mandated by federal law for children and youth with special needs and disabilities.

Alaska has 386 public elementary and secondary schools that employ approximately 114 school nurses full- or part-time. Itinerant public health nurses provide school nursing services in some rural schools. Most child care programs have no nurses on staff and rely on public health nurses to assist in meeting those needs. Nursing services are reduced annually or eliminated because of budget cuts. These reductions occur when the need for these services is increasing markedly.

School districts and the departments of Education, and Health and Social Services should support and provide funds to maintain and expand basic school and public health nursing programs in rural and urban areas. Incentives should be offered to encourage school districts that do not have health services to institute them.

School Counseling: 10

Young people need greater connections to school, family and community. Psychological counseling and social work services for elementary school students are a key to helping many students make the often-difficult transition from elementary to junior high school. All of Alaska has just 10 non-academic counselors at the elementary level and almost no social workers for home visiting and family aid. Most students statewide are in the elementary grades. If social and emotional problems are not prevented now, the state faces years of treatment later.

Initiate and expand school counseling programs in grades K-12, especially at the elementary school level.

Various methods can be used, including contracting with non-profits; funding more school nurses, social workers and counselors; and developing big brother/big sister-type volunteer programs with interested teachers, elders, parents, grandparents, administrators, legislators, professionals and other community role models.

Natural Helpers/Peer Counseling: 11

Natural Helpers is a powerful social support and self-esteem building program for young people. That program, and variations such as Anchorage's Dram-edy, operate on a simple principle. Youth and adults to whom young people say they would turn for help are trained to enhance their natural helping skills so that they become a highly skilled, natural mental health resource in schools and elsewhere.

A combination of programs that includes natural helpers and cross-age mentoring has been shown to reduce teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, dropout rates and other problems. Older students, adults, model students and those with problems can all be mentors for students. More Native youth should be trained as natural helpers. These programs are extremely low cost and effective.

Natural helpers and cross-age mentoring have been shown to reduce teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, dropout rates and other problems.

Programs that use students as natural helpers to teach and help other students should be expanded and funded in grades K-12. Programs should include academic tutoring as well as emotional counseling. Volunteer effort and non-financial incentives should be used to encourage participation.

"Without learning to express myself (through Dram-edy) I would be dead now."

—Jeff Atuk, Dram-edy, Anchorage

Mental Health Minimum Funding: 12

The National Institute of Mental Health estimate that about 10% of children have serious mental health needs is commonly accepted. The Commission heard repeated testimony about Alaska's existing mental health system inadequately responding to children's mental health needs from infancy through adolescence. Too often, children needing services are referred to the child protection system for their needed care, yet such referrals are not the best way to treat these problems. The 1986 long-range plan of the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities calls for significant expansion of children's mental health services. The settlement of the Mental Health Lands Act will likely ensure adequate annual funding for mental health treatment and promotion of good mental health.

The Mental Health Board and the Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that at least 33 percent of funds expected from the Mental Health Lands Act settlement are allocated to services for children and youth, including children experiencing violence at home and runaway youth with mental health needs, since children are one-third of the population and have been traditionally underserved. This would help ensure sufficient mental health funding through the Mental Health Lands Act to cover children's mental health needs. Children with primarily mental health needs should not necessarily be referred into the Division of Family and Youth Services system.

Children and Family Research: 13

We in Alaska now continually need to gather research and reports from other parts of the nation to use as a base for our policy decisions. This need exists at almost every level of services to children and families. Our present methods of data collection and research are costly, time consuming, redundant and often ineffective, but they are better than nothing. Research should be centralized and disseminated to eliminate costly mistakes and inappropriate practices and to address the unique environmental influences of our state on children and families. It should include provisions for child and family research, educational research and cross-cultural research to help ensure that decisions are based on data relevant to Alaska. Such a preventive focus would enable Alaska to become a leader by disseminating within the state and exporting outside of the state valid, research-based knowledge.

The state should provide funds to conduct, analyze and disseminate research relevant to Alaska's children and families.

Adolescent Survey: 14

No comprehensive survey of Alaska's youth and their needs exists. Program design and resource allocation requires guesswork without reliable baseline data. The Indian Health Service will survey a representative sample of Alaska Native youth with the Minnesota Adolescent Health Survey. This will provide data on areas such as self-perceived health status, self-image, nutrition, mental health, drug and alcohol use, and sexual activity and identity. State agencies that work with youth could join with the Indian Health Service to survey a sample of all youth in Alaska and provide valuable information to remove the guesswork from planning.

State agencies should be funded to survey jointly a representative sample of Alaska's youth to provide baseline data on a wide range of health, education and social issues for purposes of comprehensive planning, specific program design and evaluation of resource allocation effectiveness.

Hire Qualified Natives: 15

Native children are a large proportion of students or social services clients, but few if any Native teachers, counselors or staff are hired to provide role and cultural models. Many Natives do not possess the degrees or certification requirements these positions require, but they offer the cultural understanding vital for Native young people to succeed in school and for non-Natives to understand Native cultures. One of the most frequent recommendations we heard from Native youth was the need for more Native teachers, counselors and other role models.

Native children are a large proportion of students or social services clients, but few if any Native teachers, counselors or staff are hired to provide role and cultural models.

Schools and human services agencies serving Native children, youth and families should hire qualified Natives as service providers to children. Elders and paraprofessionals recognized by the Native community are qualified by their life experiences and should be employed where appropriate.

Native corporations and the University of Alaska should work together to broaden the availability of programs that prepare Native youth for these jobs, actively encourage Native youth to participate and offer sufficient assistance to ensure that students complete these programs.

Rural services: **16**

Traditional human service delivery systems have not successfully met the needs of rural and Native residents.

Much interest exists around the state for an integrated community development approach. This model recognizes that individual, mental and emotional stress comes from the social, economic and spiritual struggles of the community. These underlying issues lead youth to feel despair.

While the individual is central to traditional North American culture, the community is central to traditional Native culture. Using a community development approach allows each community to identify its own problems and take collective responsibility for healing itself. The community directs its own healing effort, which is broadly based rather than narrowly problem focused.

Rural services are fragmented and are often the first to be cut when state budgets are tightened. Existing services often miss the target for which they are intended. Rather than addressing the underlying causes of unhealthy families and communities, they focus on specific symptoms. In their present form, state funded services hinder the delivery of integrated rural programs. The state should be responding to rural community needs through its funding mechanisms and program designs. A major shift from categorical funding to more of a block grant structure must be designed within and across state agency boundaries. State dollars and human resources must be committed to the belief that the true source of healing lies in the ability of rural communities to do it themselves.

Traditional human service delivery systems have not successfully met the needs of rural and Native residents.

Rural areas should receive state assistance to develop a rural services task force in conjunction with state government to explore and establish pilot community development programs that jointly address social, spiritual and economic needs. Technical assistance should be a part of the task force that helps to establish service goals and develop guidelines for budget integration. Appropriate outcome evaluations should be required.

"I'm an Indian and grew up on a reservation and I know what it's like to have outsiders come in and tell you what to do and where to go."

—Theresa Sappier, Suicide Project, Alaska Native Health Board, Anchorage

The principles of integrated community development include the following:

- Information and education that changes community members' attitudes to give them a sense of power in shaping their own lives;
- Internal needs assessment to identify needs and ways they can be met in the context of the community and culture;
- Program design where communities establish mechanisms to develop locally agreed upon programs;
- Funding resources where categorical funding is changed to support community designed programs that integrate social, spiritual and economic needs;
- Technical assistance available to communities as they request it including program, training or clinical help;
- Services delivered as much as possible in the community with links established to regular service hub communities.

Juvenile Diversion: 17

Programs to divert juvenile offenders from the formal justice system have been successful and cost effective. These youth are often at risk of running away, are experiencing family problems and are potential substance abusers. Early help that does not label them as offenders could prevent future problems. The state's previous program funding has been significantly reduced.

The Division of Family and Youth Services together with the judicial system should again fund and expand a juvenile diversion program as an alternative to the traditional, punitive juvenile justice system. The program would allow youths charged with first-time, less serious crimes to do community service, pay restitution and receive intensive family support services.

Background Checks: 18

Our children are potentially at risk of abuse because pre-employment investigations for prior history of abuse are not required. Several obstacles prevent reducing this risk including the following:

- Abusers often have no formal conviction record.
- Criminal background checks are currently authorized but not required.
- Child caregivers are frequently hired on short notice and work briefly before moving to a better paying job.
- Agencies that investigate criminal histories and licensing actions have insufficient personnel.
- Convicted offenders of sexual assault may now have their record cleared through a suspended imposition of sentence regardless of whether they spend any time in jail.
- No system keeps track of reports of abuse on the same alleged abuser or allows disclosure to appropriate persons.

A statewide system that provides employers with the criminal history of all personnel working directly with or supervising children should be developed. This system should provide the information in a timely way at little cost to employee or employer. To assure that all sexual assault convictions remain on the record, criminal sentencing laws should be amended to prohibit suspended imposition of sentences for individuals convicted of sexual assault. Additionally, the child protection laws should allow for appropriate disclosure of instances of abuse by a person who works directly with or supervises children to authorized persons or agencies that employ people or use volunteers who work with children. Due process requires that the alleged abuser be given the opportunity to have a fair hearing before a determination that the report of abuse is founded is disclosed.

Law Enforcement: 19

In many areas the Commission studied, changes in the law are not needed. Alcohol and other drug use is now illegal for minors. Not enough officers exist, however, to enforce these laws, especially in rural areas. Law enforcement is directed to more serious violations. Testimony repeatedly emphasized this gap, as well as the need to train law enforcement personnel more in substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and how these problems and their solutions are viewed in Alaska's different cultures.

More law enforcement personnel are needed in many areas of the state to enforce existing laws against violence and substance use. Law enforcement personnel should be trained in substance abuse, family violence and cultural awareness.

CHILD CARE ISSUES:
Introduction

Alaska needs a first-class child care system for its children and families.

Child care demand is increasing in Alaska and throughout the nation. Changing population and economic conditions have resulted in a growing number of children being cared for outside their own homes. Seventy percent of Anchorage's single mothers with children under 6 work outside the home, and 45% of all jobs in Alaska are held by women. Alaska women have more children at a younger age and return to work sooner than the national average. Each year more than 11,000 babies are born in Alaska. Children under age 11 are 21% of Alaska's population while those under 5 are 11%. Single-parent and two-working-parent families have become the norm. As the extended family has declined and family members are unavailable to care for children, the need for safe and nurturing care in Alaska for children outside their homes has become an urgent concern of many parents.

Alaska needs a first-class child care system for its children and families.

Alaska parents experience significant barriers locating child care services. These barriers may be caused by services that cost more than the family can pay, services that are inaccessible with the family's means of transportation, an inadequate range of quality alternatives, a lack of easily obtainable information or a service that doesn't exist. These barriers may force the family to choose from three difficult alternatives: to place children in unstable and inadequate care; to leave the children unsupervised; to quit work or drop out of school.

Parents face these barriers throughout the state. Certain factors have inhibited the evolution of quality child care services in Alaska:

- Isolation: Child care professionals and parent activists, key leaders in child care services, are separated by vast distances expensive to cross by air, road or telephone and lack the time for casual and formal exchanges of ideas.
- Multiple services: Child care services are offered by dozens of state, local and private agencies, each with its particular mandate, funding limits and expertise. Families, providers and agencies have trouble identifying

It is one of my major priorities to establish throughout the state a child care system that is workable, that is fair and which integrates with the public school system in a sensible way.

Clearly over the last few years, the trend has been that parents—whether it's the single parent or two parents—have to work outside the home. Parents who are able or choose to stay at home certainly work and may need child care. But parents who work outside the home have the most immediate and continuing need for reliable, quality care for their kids.

I would like to have a child care system in this state that will be the model throughout the country.

—Remarks by Governor Steve Cowper to the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth.

"I am not there to manage children but to provide developmentally appropriate education."

—Judy Cole, Kindergarten teacher, Juneau

available resources. No agency or coordinated effort oversees the entire child care community nor sets the course for state policy and funding.

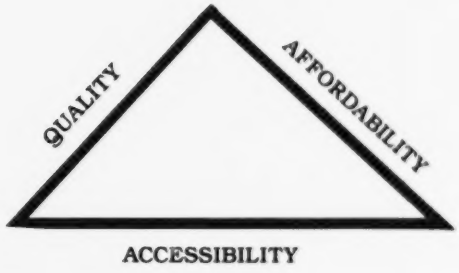
- Lack of data: No central agency collects or analyzes data on children. Action is slow when information is sketchy on facts such as the numbers of children in different types of child care, working families with children and working families needing child care.
- Financial support: Most parents cannot afford quality child care without some financial assistance. Employers in Alaska have been slow to respond to parent employee needs.

Quality child care is a necessity, not a luxury.

It should be a vital concern to all Alaskans, not just parents, because it touches many aspects of our collective life—families, job productivity, poverty, education and health care. A quality child care system in Alaska must strengthen and support all our families and communities. Only 3.7% of all U.S. families have the traditional structure of a mother who stays at home and a father who works.

Robert Halpern, a visiting associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, drew the following conclusions about the national changes affecting children and their families:

- Families with young children increasingly depend on agencies outside their informal social networks for the emotion, information and material support underlying nurturant childrearing.
- Our sense of collective responsibility for other people's children is deteriorating.
- The stress on parents of trying to provide both adequate economic support and adequate care and nurturance for children is likely to intensify.
- We as a society face the urgent task of renewing and redefining our social contract with each other, and with young families in particular.



Alaska needs child care.

The increased demand for care and the inadequate supply is one side of the child care triangle. The cost of providing child care is the second side. The third side is the quality of programs in which we place our children. Tremendous gaps exist between supply and demand, between what care costs and what parents can afford to pay and between inadequate facilities filled with overcrowded programs and high quality programs. One gap is currently filled by child care workers who labor for poverty wages. Another is being filled by children who have anxiety resulting from frequent turnover in child care arrangements and changing child care providers. These gaps are also being filled by children who roam the streets and are left at home because their parents cannot afford any care.

These gaps must be filled by society instead of children. We must all recognize our responsibility to future generations to give these children a good start.

These gaps must be filled by spending current dollars on prevention instead of future dollars to cure problems through intervention, rehabilitation, counseling, incarceration and remedial services.

What does a first-class early childhood program look like?

Quality, affordability and accessibility are concerns identified by parents and early childhood professionals. They form the cornerstones of a first-class child care system. The

Quality child care is a necessity, not a luxury.

system must include well-paid and well-trained staff, safe and suitable facilities, developmentally appropriate materials and curriculum, support services and training for parents, and resource and referral centers to distribute information about child care alternatives. The system must have high quality standards for all child care situations and the programs must be available to all families who need child care. Such a system must be funded by a variety of sources—parents, state and federal government, employers and charitable organizations.

The early years of a child's life are crucial: intellectual, physical, social and emotional growth occur rapidly between birth and age 8. Because parents are any child's first and most significant teachers, they need assistance and support to do the best job preparing their children for the next stage of development.

If we as a state were seriously interested in giving substance to the phrase to which we all pay so much lip service—children are Alaska's future—then we would devote additional resources to children from birth to age 8. At the national level, conservatives and liberals, senators and representatives, women and men from all parts of the country have recognized that child care is a national crisis. Recent legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Congress highlighting a broad-based commitment to improving the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care for American families. Alaska has joined the nation in addressing the crisis. We have the opportunity to lead the nation in creating solutions.

We're ready to change directions.

If we as a state were seriously interested in giving substance to the phrase to which we all pay so much lip service—children are Alaska's future—then we would devote additional resources to children from birth to age 8.

A first-class child care system includes the following:

- consistent, loving caregivers who are trained and are fairly compensated for their important work;
- safe, warm, cheerful physical environments with adequate exercise space;
- developmentally and culturally appropriate books, materials, equipment and programs;
- small group size and low child/teacher ratios;
- adequate and nutritious food;
- a resource and referral system that makes information available to parents and providers;
- parental involvement, education and assistance;
- employer assistance, such as flexible personnel and benefit policies and on-site care;
- community support, both financial and emotional, from schools and other public agencies, private organizations and individuals.

CHILD CARE: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Quality

Salaries/Child Care Grant Program: 20

Child care providers in Alaska receive an average salary of $4.50 an hour. They sacrifice a fair, equitable salary to provide desperately needed service. They subsidize the industry. "Low wages, long hours and very demanding responsibilities make turnover a persistent problem in the field," wrote Marian Estelle, director of the Petersburg (Alaska) Child Care Center. Quality child care in this state will soon evaporate if staff wages, benefits and status do not improve. We must pay professional scale wages or face consequences that include inadequate, low quality warehousing of children, more children left without supervision and ever fewer qualified child care professionals.

The Alaska program that directly funds child care is the Child Care Grant Program. Licensed child care centers or homes that will accept Day Care Assistance children are eligible to receive a payment each month for each child who attends. The program now has 190 centers and 170 homes under contract. It promotes quality child care in licensed homes and centers by partially funding operating expenses such as wages and benefits, food, staff training, materials and parent education. The FY88 state appropriation was $600,000, which paid $10 per full-time child for each month in care, with some geographical adjustments. This program indirectly benefits parents by increasing child care quality in centers or homes paid these grants. The maximum allowed by statute is $50 per child in full-time care. The state has never paid that amount.

Child Care Grant Program funds should be increased to the statutory maximum of $50 per full-time child per month to provide additional resources for such purposes as increased staff salaries and professional training.

Child care providers in Alaska receive an average salary of $4.50 an hour. They sacrifice a fair, equitable salary to provide desperately needed service. They subsidize the industry.

High Quality Standards: 21

The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, in its standards for high quality care, says a first-class program meets the needs of and promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children and adults. All aspects of the program are considered: interaction among staff and children, curriculum, staff qualifications and development, staffing patterns, physical environment, health and safety, nutrition and food service, and program evaluation.

A good program is developmentally appropriate. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the voice of the profession with 55,000 members, defines that phrase. A good program provides children with learning and enough varied experiences to help them develop socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children of both sexes have equal opportunities to participate in all activities. Activities and materials emphasize concrete experience, which encourages children to think, reason, question and experiment. Quality programs develop positive self-concepts, including a respect for the cultural diversity for all children and staff. Parent involvement is regularly encouraged.

Alaska has only two programs currently certified through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs—Chugiak Children's Services in Eagle River and the Anchorage School District's Career Center. With encouragement and assistance other programs can move toward excellence.

The state should provide grant funds to enable early childhood programs to become accredited through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs and should financially assist programs that continue to meet academy standards. Accredited programs should be saluted with a Governor's Award and other public recognition.

The state should also participate in any federal programs that promote and broaden accessibility to high quality child care and should encourage local governments to fund matching incentives.

A good program provides children with learning and enough varied experiences to help them develop socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Specialized Training: 22

Training is the hallmark theme the Commission heard throughout public hearings. While the state and private sectors must help make child care more accessible, well-trained, experienced staff are needed across the state in every center, home or school. Along with university-based degree and credentialing programs, local and regional training must be available to providers who must work full-time and also pursue training. Urgent needs for specialized training exist across the state.

Urgent needs for specialized training exist across the state.

Specialized training at local, regional and state levels is needed for early childhood educators and family home care providers in cross-cultural communication; language development; meeting the special needs of chronically ill children, disabled children and their families; recognizing symptoms of abuse and neglect; working with children in need and school-age children in child care settings; caring for infants and toddlers; operating licensed family homes; implementing National Association for the Education of Young Children standards for developmentally appropriate care and administering an effective early childhood program.

Quality infant care: 23

The fastest growing segment of working parents is mothers with babies under 3. Infant care in Alaska is the most difficult to find and one of the most expensive. If more babies need care because their parents work, we must support good care with trained professionals to help the very youngest children develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually.

All our infants have the right to thrive.

Babies have to be talked to, held when they're fed, cuddled, played with, rocked, smiled at and nurtured. A quality program for infants means such things as a low infant-to-staff ratio, consistent caregivers for each infant, developmentally and culturally appropriate interactions, materials and space designed especially for babies, and high parent involvement in what happens in the program.

Many licensed programs are unable to accept infants, particularly those with special needs, because of a lack of trained staff, the high costs of adult-child ratios needed to adequately care for those children, inadequate floor space and materials, and building accessibility problems.

The state should pay up to one-half the program's cost of care for infants when programs meet high standards. The departments of Community and Regional Affairs, Health and Social Services, and Education should develop a Criteria for Excellence for infant and toddler care to define those quality standards.

"Research has shown that a child's personality is developed by age 3 and that 50% of the intelligence measurable at 17 is achieved by age 4."

—Burton White, early childhood psychologist.

Primary Grade Ratios: 24

Early childhood, as the Commission defines it, is from birth to age 8 or through third grade. These critical years require special support and guidance as children establish their self-concepts, good judgment and view of the world. Skills learned in grades K-3 form the foundation for school success later. Self-esteem, confidence to learn and creative thinking depend upon the value, quality and soundness of the foundations built during these years. Group size and the number of adults among children in early childhood classrooms make a significant difference in the way they learn new skills and achieve self-confidence. The ratio of adults to children determines the amount of individual attention any child might receive and directly bears on building a child's self-esteem. This is true in public kindergarten and primary grades as well as in early childhood programs for younger children.

While Alaska establishes a maximum adult-to-child ratio of 1:15 for 5 year olds in child care programs and requires no more than 1:20 for other school-age children in group child care, no standards exist for class size or adult-to-child ratios for children the same age in public schools. Because of school budget cuts, overcrowding occurs in many schools. Kindergartens may now have 35 children assigned to one teacher. In such crowded classrooms, teachers cannot physically provide enough appropriate, concrete learning experiences or individual interaction. As a teacher from Dillingham told the Commission, children complain about "feeling squished."

The State Board of Education should adopt a policy urging a maximum of 20 children per teacher in kindergarten through grade 3. The state should help fund local district efforts to meet that ratio.

1. Quality: *Well-Trained Staff*

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Consistent, well-trained staff are the key to quality child care. If they understand child development and can recognize individual children's growth and development, they can provide the best activities, guidance and materials for that child. Parents can have more confidence that their children are in the best possible hands beside their own.

The professional status of child care workers is undermined by low wages, lack of benefits, poor working conditions, society's low appreciation of their work's value, lack of education standards and the absence of professional career ladders.

Education and Training: 25

Interaction between an adult and a child in care is a very critical part of any program. High turnover of dissatisfied and inadequately trained personnel creates an unstable and potentially unsafe situation for children. Trained staff from the children's primary culture are important to help children learn to function in a group and identify with an appropriate role model.

Child care providers have rarely been trained in child development, health or teaching methods. In response, the state developed the Education and Training Grant program in the Department of Community and Regional Affairs. Grants are competitively awarded for projects that will train practitioners and administrators in licensed centers and homes. Last year $100,000 in state funds was distributed in 32 grants to 16 communities and three statewide projects. This extremely popular program is an efficient, effective use of state funds.

Education and Training Grant funds from the Department of Community and Regional Affairs should be increased so eligible programs, organizations and communities can offer developmentally appropriate early childhood education/training and scholarships for courses and other professional development.

Regional training programs for providers who care for infants and toddlers should be continued and coordinated through the University of Alaska system and the Department of Education.

WHAT ONE GRANT BOUGHT

One program in Fairbanks received an Education and Training Grant of $2,144 in 1986. With that small amount they purchased the following: 11 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) videotapes, eight 1 1/2-hour local workshops and release time for 12 caregivers to spend 2 1/2 hours a day, four days a week for four weeks at the Career Training Center and two teachers to coordinate the early childhood workshops mentioned above. In addition, three centers paid the application fees for NAEYC Accreditation Self Study fees.

Career Ladder: 26

A student in Alaska currently cannot obtain a four-year degree in early childhood education or specialize in any related degree field, such as pre-elementary special education.

Alaska teachers possessing a Type A certificate, which makes them eligible to teach in early childhood grades K-3, may not have had any child development or specialized early childhood education courses depending on the college they attended. To promote developmentally appropriate classes in the primary grades, an early childhood 20-hour endorsement on the Type A teaching credential should be required. A specialized in-home training program for family child care home providers should be offered. Subsidies for substitutes should be offered through networking and resource and referral systems so providers can attend state, regional or local training sessions and workshops.

Although approximately 50% of elementary school students are in early childhood grades K-3, administrators seeking a Type B certificate cannot select even one early childhood course toward their degree. Administrative and graduate courses should be offered regularly.

Services to children in preschools and child care programs may be delivered by anyone 18 years old with just 10 hours of informal training. Those seeking additional education cannot find appropriate courses at the university level. With the consolidation of Alaska's community colleges into the university system, two-year early childhood degrees and one-year technical certificates in early childhood education which were offered in some communities may no longer be available. Alaska has no formal training system to support caregivers who want to complete the national Child Development Associate credential. The current Type E credential, designed three years ago for child care staff who had obtained a national Child

(Continued on Page 38)

The University of Alaska and the Department of Education should develop an early childhood career ladder that would do the following:

a. promote a one-year technical credential for early childhood professionals.

b. promote the existing Type E credential as the first step in a professional career ladder.

c. establish a 20 credit hour endorsement for early childhood education on the regular Type A teaching credential.

d. establish an Early Childhood Bachelor of Education Degree program, such as the model proposed by the University of Alaska Southeast and based on the guidelines developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

e. require newly hired teachers in grades K-3 to have an endorsement in early childhood. This requirement should be reasonably phased in.

f. offer a minimum of one course in early childhood education as part of the sequence of elective courses required in a Type B administrative credential.

g. establish a Pre-elementary Special Education Degree program in Alaska to meet the increasing demands for specialized training.

h. establish a scholarship fund in conjunction with the Child Care Grant Program for child care providers, particularly in rural Alaska, to pursue further training and degrees such as the national Child Development Associate.

i. offer subsidies for substitutes through networking and resource and referral systems so providers can attend state, regional or local training sessions and workshops.

A student in Alaska currently cannot obtain a four-year degree in early childhood education or specialize in any related degree field, such as pre-elementary special education.

Development Associate credential should be more widely encouraged.

The state must require the additional education and training and either provide it or the resources to do it. Requiring the training without making it available is impractical, and making it available without requiring it historically has not worked in this state. Given the low salaries, the low incentive to remain in the field, the high turnover and the high cost of time away from the job, training under the current situation is unrealistic for most child care providers.

Historically, the University of Alaska offered early childhood degree programs in the 1970s. The reason most often cited for eliminating these programs was lack of enrollment. Students reasoned, "Why should I get a degree in early childhood to work in a center that pays me $4 an hour with no vacation and no benefits, when I could get a degree and a teaching certificate and make $30,000?" Students interested in entering the early childhood field must be subsidized to attend courses and complete degrees. The university must be subsidized to offer relevant, high quality course sequences across the state.

1. Quality: *Culture*

Alaska is rich in its diversity of cultures. What we teach our young reflects how we value those cultures. Early childhood programs across the state demonstrate that value in a wide variety of ways.

Some early childhood programs in Alaska assist children to integrate culture in a variety of ways. Model programs like Head Start have made a tremendous commitment to local culture. Local people run the centers, determine the goals and priorities, speak the language, celebrate and promote important aspects of the culture. The programs are committed to involve families and the community in a young child's growth and discovery of the world.

Local Hire: 27

Studies show that the early experiences of a child, particularly one from a low income or minority culture, significantly affect school and life success. Children from minority cultures must receive appropriate and rich experiences in their early years. Programs and materials should be culturally appropriate.

Many children's first language is not English. As children begin to find their way in the world their first language must be recognized. Assessment and evaluation—processes that follow children through school into adulthood—must recognize the child's primary language. In a country where educational success is too often determined by the ability to use English words and Western concepts, a child whose primary language is not English is often at a disadvantage and may be inappropriately labeled. Young children in this situation are often confused and develop poor self-esteem. Self-esteem and confidence learned early help children survive and thrive in a complex world. The Commission found that many problems described in the youth part of this report result from the lack of ability of educators and administrators to assist children to integrate different cultures in ways that build self-esteem and confidence.

Alaska must show its commitment to cultural diversity in early childhood programs where the next generation learns what to value.

More early childhood educators and family child care providers from Alaska's diverse cultures must be recruited, trained and hired in local communities.

Alaska must show its commitment to cultural diversity in early childhood programs where the next generation learns what to value.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Awareness Training: 28

Studies show that early interactions between children and adults significantly affect a child's competence and confidence in later life. Children from varied cultural environments must receive appropriate and rich cultural experiences that validate the cultural values and practices of their families and communities. Those who administer and teach early childhood programs need to understand and appreciate the cultural environment of the children with whom they work.

Child care providers, educators and administrators, should be trained to heighten their awareness of cultural differences and improve their ability to resolve issues in a culturally appropriate manner.

Children from varied cultural environments must receive appropriate and rich cultural experiences that validate the cultural values and practices of their families and communities.

Assess in Primary Language: 29

In Alaska, many linguistically and culturally different children are identified for special education services far out of proportion to their ratio in the population, especially as learning disabled and speech impaired. For young children just entering the system, this assessment could mean a brief treatment of a correctable problem or years of labeling in the special education system—one often perceived as different from the regular classroom. Early childhood teachers, school district administrators and special education staffs need training on language and cultural differences to be considered in assessing and placing minority students. Instructional aides, parents and volunteers from a child's home culture should be involved with primary assessment.

Screening and assessment of young children to determine developmental readiness for learning should be done in the child's primary language.

Culturally Appropriate Materials: 30

Minority children in an early childhood program need relevant, familiar materials and activities. Cognitive and language skills will be developed more easily when a child's home culture or the local community life and culture are integrated with the school culture. Validations of children's personal experiences make them proud of what they already know and confident to learn more to add to those experiences. The same materials and curriculum may enrich other children in the program, demonstrating from the beginning a respect and appreciation for cultures and languages other than their own.

Curriculum and materials culturally appropriate for Alaska should be available to all early childhood programs through the state library and other services.

1. Quality: *Health*

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Child Care Revolving Loan Fund: 31

Centers and homes that provide child care and education must be healthy for our children. But many programs are located in inadequate, makeshift spaces, sometimes poorly heated and often with minimal outdoor play space and equipment. When children spend so much of their time indoors, the space must be adequate for the number of children as well as well-lit, heated and maintained.

Child care is labor intensive and capital poor. Alaska used to have a Child Care Revolving Loan Fund for capital improvement. The maximum loan per facility was $50,000. By banking standards the loans were small. Loans were only available to property owners who often did not run the programs. These factors make it extremely difficult for child care programs to find needed capital to improve existing buildings and make them healthy places for children.

Alaska should reinstate the low interest Child Care Revolving Loan Fund, increase its previous level of funding and simplify the required paperwork. This loan program provides funding support so child care facilities can meet all codes and ensure a healthy environment for our children.

Child care is labor intensive and capital poor.

Comprehensive Health Screening: 32

Comprehensive health screenings assure parents and practitioners that the care for young children is appropriate to their needs. Screenings that check height and weight, blood pressure, teeth and include a random check for scoliosis promote normal growth and development. Regular attention to each child's physical health is essential to all children's well-being. The only funding presently available for comprehensive health screening of children in the Department of Health and Social Services is for children who have already been identified as developmentally disabled.

Required immunizations, adequate nutrition and access to medical, dental and mental health services are the right of all of Alaska's children and part of any quality early childhood system.

Comprehensive health screenings should be guaranteed to all Alaska's infants, toddlers, preschoolers and students, to identify problems as soon as possible to prevent more expensive treatment later.

Regular attention to each child's physical health is essential to all children's well-being.

Respite Care and Therapeutic Services: 33

Maintaining the health of children with special needs is especially crucial to their growth. More children survive birth with severe disabilities as our knowledge in neonatal medicine expands. These children require expensive and life-long services. At least 11 children under 8 currently live in nursing homes in Alaska and eight children under 4 literally live in hospitals. The families of these children can be strengthened so they can adequately care for their children if they have support services. Services can include shared care, homemaker/home health services, respite care services, in-home child care, family subsidy programs, or specialized foster care.

An increasing number of Alaska's children require counseling as a result of trauma, emotional stress in their families or mental illness. These children should have access to therapeutic child care and counseling integrated with their families and schools. Therapeutic child and respite care can be important to prevent stress-related mental health problems that may arise without time-out periods for parents.

The state and local communities should fund low-cost respite care for families who need child care relief for brief periods of time. Therapeutic services for young children with special needs and their families should also be supported by the state and local communities. Both services should be promoted through resource and referral services.

"The working poor do not have the resources for a 'time out' from their children."

—Milli Andreini, Director,
Anchorage Child Abuse Board

1. Quality: *Regulations*

Regulation of early childhood programs is a state responsibility, a necessary consumer protection for parents and children. Regulation helps assure children's rights to an acceptable level of care. Regulations help ensure that children are not at risk and are in a safe, healthy environment while their parents work.

In Alaska, general confusion and misunderstanding exist about regulations and which state agency does what. This confusion contributes to incoherent public policy, which has resulted in gaps and overlaps in the regulations and in agency responsibilities.

The Department of Health and Social Services, for example, regulates and licenses child care centers and family child care homes with one set of regulations.

The Municipality of Anchorage uses that set along with its requirements to regulate programs there.

The Department of Education regulates and certifies pre-elementary schools for 3- to 5-year-old children when the programs receive direct state or federal aid and their primary purpose is educational.

The Department of Community and Regional Affairs monitors the Day Care Assistance Program, Head Start, Child Care Grant Program, Education and Training Grant Program, Dependent Care Grant Program, and Kawerak Early Childhood Programs.

The Department of Environmental Conservation conducts sanitation inspections.

The Department of Public Safety conducts fire inspections.

Other regulations also cover child abuse reporting and investigation, and the food services program. In all, six state agencies and the federal government are involved.

No one minimum standard of care exists for all children in Alaska as it does in most other states. The Department of Health and Social Services' regulations, which now apply to out-of-home care but not preschools, could be modified to include children of all ages in various settings. These regulations are the best guarantee of children's general health and safety so the current pre-elementary school regulations could be repealed, reducing gaps and overlaps in the state system.

Regulation helps assure children's rights to an acceptable level of care. Regulations help ensure that children are not at risk and are in a safe, healthy environment while their parents work.

Basic Regulations: 34

Serious inequities separate regulations governing preschools and child care centers. For example, child care center regulations require acceptable adult-to-child ratios, facility square footage, training in child development of center administrators, healthy behavior management techniques and the specific scheduling of developmentally appropriate activities. Preschool regulations require none of that, except for a general training plan for staff.

The guarantee of minimal safe care for one 3 year old may vary widely, depending on whether that child attends a child care center or a preschool. The Department of Health and Social Services' regulations are more complete standards. They could be slightly modified to include all programs for children in care, regardless of the number of hours in care or the program's title.

Regulations should be easy to understand and widely distributed. They represent our common expectations for the safe and appropriate care of Alaska's children and are every child's right. A media campaign would do much to increase the number of regulated programs and promote a higher level of quality and parent awareness.

One standard set of basic child care regulations for all Alaska's children in early childhood programs should be used. The Commission recommends that all child care and preschool programs serving children from birth to age 8 be called Early Childhood Programs to build a community among providers and educators and to heighten public awareness of our common commitment to quality care for all children regardless of the number of hours in care.

Licensing/Technical Assistance: 35

Regulations are ineffective if they are not monitored by licensing specialists to ensure that they are being met. A well-trained licensing specialist educated in child development and other necessary skills can also offer needed technical assistance and informal training to program administrators. Regular interaction with a licensing specialist can give child care providers a different perspective on their programs.

While the number of children in child care and the facilities serving them have increased dramatically in Alaska in recent years, the number of staff to support, supervise and monitor these programs has dramatically decreased. Lack of adequate licensing staff also means long waiting lists for licensing inspections and delays of up to a year. This may drive providers underground and weaken the state's guarantee of minimum quality. Licensing specialists are in severely short supply in the departments of Health and Social Services, and Education.

The departments should explore local and regional support for on-site monitoring so that, if possible, private contractors can assist in preparing prospective homes and centers for the actual licensing inspection. Travel funds to serve child care centers, homes and preschools across the state are also scarce. As of 1987 the Department of Public Safety can no longer conduct timely fire inspections at no cost to centers, which are required to be inspected to be licensed.

The Department of Health and Social Services must fund adequate numbers of trained staff whose primary responsibility is to license homes and centers. In additional, the departments of Education, Community and Regional Affairs, Public Safety and Law must fund and maintain qualified staff to monitor programs and grants, review regulations, develop policies and provide technical assistance and training. Licensing staff should conduct periodic unannounced visits to centers and homes. The state should guarantee timely fire inspections at no cost to centers.

Regulations are ineffective if they are not monitored by licensing specialists to ensure that they are being met.

Interagency Coordination: 36

Three state agencies with different perspectives have been most active in early childhood regulations. Unlike many other states where agencies dispute and battle for turf, staff of Alaska's departments have proven they can cooperate and support each other. A diversity of agencies active in early childhood is a strength only if they coordinate.

Though the 1982 Tri-department Agreement on Early Childhood mandates cooperation in five areas of mutual concern, tri-department meetings between the departments of Health and Social Services, Education, and Community and Regional Affairs have not been agency priorities. They are irregular and less effective than they could be. This structure has also not included the three other key agencies who must be involved—the departments of Public Safety, Environmental Conservation, and Law. The expanded committee structure could offer a forum for policy development, advocacy and information sharing if the agencies would emphasize it.

In addition, the Interagency Coordinating Council, mandated by P.L. 99-457, involves some of the same agencies along with the Governor's Council on Handicapped and Gifted. Under this mandate they must cooperate to plan and deliver services for young children with special needs. Collectively, the expanded tri-department committee could do much to help implement a comprehensive system for care and education for all young Alaskans and their families.

Cooperation and planning among the six state agencies involved with early childhood education and child care is essential. The tri-department Interagency Committee on Early Childhood should be expanded to include all these agencies and the Governor's Council on Handicapped and Gifted. The committee should be promoted and funded and should hold quarterly public meetings to implement a first-class system across the state.

Anchorage Licensing: 37

Anchorage is the only Alaska community that has additional requirements, beyond state licensing, for operating child care centers. This dual licensing is expensive and confusing for the public and child care practitioners. The municipality began work to take over the state licensing responsibility in January 1987. The process is not yet finished.

The Municipality of Anchorage, which is scheduled to assume licensing responsibilities for child care center programs there, should work closely with the Department of Health and Social Services to enforce common standards and promote high quality programs. The Department of Health and Social Services has a skilled and seasoned staff. Their experience, historical perspective and training should be used on a consulting basis by the municipality for at least a year after it assumes the licensing responsibility.

2. Affordability

Millions of parents in this country are not working because they can't afford to pay child care expenses. Millions of children whose parents work and can't afford child care are left alone to care for themselves, for each other and even for younger siblings, including infants. In a family where both parents work, child care may be the second largest annual cost after housing. Low-income families may pay one-third to one-half of their monthly paycheck for child care.

The gap between how much parents can afford to pay and how much it costs to provide quality child care is currently being filled by low-paid workers subsidizing the industry, working for poverty wages with no benefits and by overcrowding children in inadequate facilities. In Alaska 90% of home care providers and 56% of those who work in child care centers earn below poverty wages. They make less than parking lot attendants or zookeepers.

Child care for working parents in Alaska is expensive. In March 1987, infant care ranged from $321 to $521 per month, preschool care from $301 to $450 per month, school-age child care from $132 to $215 per month and care for children with special needs from $600 to $1,200 per month. High quality care may be even more expensive.

Nationally, a recent survey of 600 American families, commissioned by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, recalled that nearly 40% of their respondents felt they cannot afford their current child care arrangement or the arrangement they would prefer. Much evidence indicates that Alaskans would agree. Family incomes cannot support the current system, let alone add needed resources to improve quality. The state must become involved.

What does child care actually cost?

The charts on the next pages illustrate the realistic operating cost for quality care in this state. They do not include capital costs and are based on Department of Health and Social Services requirements for child care centers, including a 1:10 ratio of staff to children. The cost is calculated for a program serving 100 children, offering breakfast, lunch, one snack and preschool activities that is open from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Very few parents could actually support such a program, even when those costs are far below a public school education.

To have affordable, quality child care, Alaska must recognize that society as a whole, and not just parents, is responsible for the care of our future generation. Public resources must be dedicated to reducing the affordability gap and to filling the quality void. The price we as a society will pay if we do not assume this responsibility and help fill this important gap will be devastating in the long run to our educational system, economy, international competitiveness and ultimately our viability as a nation.

Child care for working parents in Alaska is expensive.

If Alaska is to develop a first-class child care system, Alaska's employers must take a more active role in that system. For most employers child care affects productivity, profits and employee morale. Child care is important because parents who have it are better workers, not absent as much and stay with their jobs.

Any business can join in reaping the benefits of flexible personnel policies through direct financial assistance, or indirect assistance like resource and referral services to employees, if direct provision of child care is not realistic. Employer-sponsored child care has been the fastest growing part of the child care industry nationally. In 1982, 450 identified employers nationwide offered child care to their employees. Today more than 3,000 employers see the benefits in sponsoring child care.

To have affordable, quality child care, Alaska must recognize that society as a whole, and not just parents, is responsible for the care of our future generation.

In Alaska, the Municipality of Anchorage offers a choice of benefits to non-union employees and parents can pick child care at pre-taxed dollars. ARCO-Alaska's Dependent Care Task Force has developed a range of options for that company. Many small professional corporations offer a full range of child care benefits. Anchorage's Providence Hospital and Ketchikan General Hospital have been among the few employers to offer employees on-site child care.

A partnership of public and private employers, parents and the community must work together to support quality child care in Alaska.

Operating Costs for Quality Child Care

Expense	Cost/Month/Child	Description of Allocation
Teachers	$300	Full-time teachers @ $2000/month ($11.50/hour) and Part-time teachers @ $1000/month
Food	120	2 meals @ $2.25 each and 1 snack @$1/day
Rent and Property Tax	54	$1 per square foot @ 35 sq. ft./child, 65% usable
Staff Benefits	80	7.5% Social Security, $75/month health insurance, 2 weeks vacation and 12 days sick leave and reduced child care cost for one-half of one child
Administrators	60	Average of $2160/month @ 1.6 per program
Supplies and Educational Materials	50	Office, kitchen, classes and equipment
Support Personnel	40	Cook $1500/month, bus driver $1500/month, part-time janitor $1000/month
Utilities	20	2.47% of budget
Maintenance	20	2.47% of budget
Miscellaneous	10	1.23% of budget
Total	$754	per child per month

Assume a child care program with one class of maximum enrollments in each age group with all children attending full time. Enrollment income would be as follows:

5 infants	@ $425/month	$ 2,125
6 toddlers	@ $375/month	2,250
10 preschoolers	@ $325/month	3,250
15 kindergartners	@ $225/month	3,375
20 school age	@ $150/month	3,000
Total		$14,000

To calculate staff and benefits costs, assume an average wage of $5.50 per hour, which while higher than the current average is still not adequate compensation for the level of responsibility, commitment and knowledge required to do a good job.

Benefits were computed as follows:

1 day/month sick leave
10 days per year vacation time (for full-time employees only)
7.5% of gross wage for Social Security
2.34% of gross wage for ESC taxes
0.47% of gross wage for workman's compensation insurance
66% of health insurance premium (no dependent coverage)
No retirement
50% reduced child care charge for first child

Based on the above assumptions, the following are staff costs:

Position	Wages and Benefits/Month
1.5 infant teachers	$1,923
1.5 toddler teachers	1,923
1.5 preschool teachers	1,923
1 kindergarten teacher (6 hours/day)	1,078
1 school age teacher (3.5 hours/day)	553
1 bus driver (5 hours/day)	787
1 janitor/maintenance (5 hours/day)	787
1 cook (8 hours/day)	1,294
1 director (8+ hours/day)	2,596
Total	$12,864

The difference between income and staff wages and benefits of $1,136 must cover rent, insurance, food, vehicle maintenance, utilities, supplies and equipment. Receptionists, typists and accountants are luxuries few child care facilities can afford.

—Prepared by Commission member Patty Meritt.

Comparison of Public Schools and Private Child Care Programs

	Public Schools	Private Child Care Facilities
Program hours/day:	6.5	11 (average)
Children/teachers:	25+:1	5:1 (under 12 months) 6:1 (under 30 months) 10:1 (preschools) 15:1 (kindergarten) 20:1 (school age)
Student days/year:	180	252 (average)
Facilities:	Designed for children Paid for by government	Seldom designed for children Rented and renovated or donated by churches
Teacher qualifications:	Type A certificate/ 4 year degree	None (18 years old)
Teacher pay:	$41,000/year, 9 month contract	$6,890/year, 9 months $9,186/year, 12 months
State support:	$435/month/child plus capital appropriations	$11 to $25/month/child approximately
Local support:	Approximately 20% of operating budget of school district plus bond support	None, except in occasional rare grants for non-profits in general
Parent funding:	None required	85% to 100%

Day Care Assistance Program: 38

Alaska has few programs to assist parents with child care costs. The Day Care Assistance Program subsidizes a portion of the cost of licensed child care for parents with low and moderate incomes who are working, in training or in school. With just modestly increased funds, it will not be able to serve moderate income families. Begun in 1976, it was the first of its kind in the country and is now available in 37 Alaska communities that have licensed child care centers and homes. Parents select child care arrangements and payments are made to the licensed programs. Parents must pay the difference between the state payment and the program fees.

More than 90% of the families using the program are single parents. In many communities, all families served are below the poverty line. Also in many of the smaller communities, 40% of the families served are two-income families—the working poor. This locally administered program offers a sliding fee schedule. As incomes rise, parents pay a larger percentage of child care tuition. Many parents gradually work themselves off the program.

Waiting lists have plagued this program since its start. The lists are caused by lack of child care space and program dollars. These two factors directly correlate in many rural communities. The lack of licensed child care space prevents eligible families from receiving financial help. In urban communities, lack of specialized care and programs open during non-traditional work hours force parents to either quit work or leave children home alone.

The state should increase funding for the Day Care Assistance Program to serve more families and expand eligibility.

Alaska has few programs to assist parents with child care costs.

Facilities: 39

Along with local communities, churches and the state can help lower child care costs. Many child care facilities are inadequate for young children. Many public facilities, however, are already suitable for children. Schools, for example, have playground facilities and other suitable areas. State and municipal buildings offer opportunities for child care because employees who are parents work there.

Buildings not fully used should be made available for child care, including churches, schools, state office and municipal buildings, and vacant buildings held by state agencies such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

Flexible Personnel Policies: 40

Public and private employers should support working families to meet their child care needs. Many employers may be unaware that their current employees may be two wage earner families with children or single parents and that child care is one of their major stresses. Parents need a leave policy that includes parental leave, job sharing, flexible hours, part-time employment, use of sick leave to attend sick children, parenting education, training of supervisors and administrators about the needs of working parents, child care available on or near the job. Ample research shows that quality employer-sponsored child care is good for business.

All employers, public and private, should adopt flexible personnel policies that meet the needs of parents and families.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

State as a Model Employer: 41

The State of Alaska is the largest employer in Alaska, but its policies do not acknowledge the needs of working parents. One-third of the 1,100 respondents in a 1984 survey of state employees felt that their child care needs were not being met—that their children were in programs that offered inadequate or no learning activities and were very expensive or overcrowded. More than a third of single parents felt their needs were not being met. The federal government is the second largest employer in the state. The military is the only federal employer currently offering child care services in Alaska.

The state should develop a Model Employer Plan. Such a plan would consider job sharing, flexible hours, part-time employment, use of sick leave to attend sick children, parenting education, training of supervisors and administrators about the needs of parents, and child care on or near the job. Under the leadership of the Department of Administration, the state's Model Employer Plan should include statewide policies that address the needs of working parents as determined by a needs assessment. Each agency should submit its plan to implement a Model Employer Plan to the Department of Administration.

Optional Child Care Benefits: 42

Child care is fast becoming the newest form of employee benefits for state and local workers, Governing magazine reports. At least six states provide on-site child care for statehouse employees. Connecticut is the first to make it available to legislators and people attending public hearings. States that earlier decided to provide child care for legislative employees include Arizona, Maryland, Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin. In five other states, legislatures have provided on-site child care for other state workers but not their own employees. Thirty-three states are either offering or planning some form of child care related benefits for their employees.

Child care is fast becoming the newest form of employee benefits for state and local workers.

The state should make child care an optional benefit for state employees through the Supplemental Benefits System.

"A conservative estimate of the cost to the State of Alaska for employee time lost in Juneau and Anchorage as a result of child care concerns is $539,003 per year."

—The Alaska State Employee Child Care Survey, Richard Smiley, South East Regional Resource Center, January 1985.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Employer-Sponsored Child Care: 43

Alaska's employers lack awareness about the importance of quality child care for today's work force. Other places in the country have forged successful partnerships between public and private employers, parents and the larger communities. For some it has meant creating space to set aside in new and existing facilities for child care services. Models of such attempts are the City of San Francisco and the City of Honolulu.

The state should launch a new public/private initiative on employer-sponsored child care. A task force of individuals from the public and private sector should be created to develop a statewide strategy.

Information about quality child care should be provided to new and existing businesses, community leaders, Chambers of Commerce, mayors, local planning departments and those businesses whose corporate headquarters are outside Alaska, through the departments of Commerce and Economic Development, and Community and Regional Affairs.

The state should establish a business tax credit that would stimulate employer subsidies and cover resource and referral as well as child care services.

Municipal Child Care: 44

See Background for Employer-Sponsored Child Care above.

Local decision makers, including planners, zoning boards and developers, should be encouraged to investigate successful models elsewhere that set aside space for child care in public facilities.

3. Accessibility

Resource and Referral Agencies: **45**

Parents often have difficulty finding child care that meets their needs and matches their resources. Resource and referral centers assist parents to find affordable, appropriate child care. They also sponsor parent education and collect information about local community needs for different kinds of care. They are "one-stop shopping" for any parent's child care needs.

Child Care Connection in Anchorage is now the only child care resource and referral center in Alaska. Its staff could serve as consultants to other communities interested in establishing a resource and referral network. A resource and referral network links regions and promotes a statewide awareness of quality, as networks have done in other states.

Resource and referral centers are "one-stop shopping" for any parent's child care needs.

A statewide system of resource and referral centers to help parents find accessible, affordable, quality child care should be funded jointly by the state, local businesses, school districts and other agencies.

"Universal access, based on parental option, must be the cornerstone for all policies for young children."

—Four Year Olds, Who Is Responsible? Report to Connecticut Board of Education, 1985.

Family Child Care Providers: 46

Parents who work rotating shifts, nights or weekends, or who have children with special needs require programs with licensed and trained caregivers. Too few programs offer flexible hours, overnight care and flexible staffing to ensure safe care for children. Not enough family child care homes exist to accommodate the needs of parents who work a non-traditional or normal schedule. The result is a near crisis in urban and rural Alaska.

In rural Alaska, children are predominantly cared for in centers rather than homes, giving parents fewer options. No care is available for many who work non-traditional hours or schedules that take them out of town. In these and other instances a family child care home can offer a kind of care that larger centers cannot provide—a home away from home with few (by regulation fewer than six) or no other children and the same adult. Many parents prefer this for their young children, yet it becomes more difficult to find.

The number of family child care homes licensed by the state is the lowest since 1982 while more two wage-earner families than ever need specialized care. In Anchorage alone in January 1987, 87% of parents seeking child care for their children under 36 months old sought family child care. Only 115 active family child care homes, with a licensed capacity of 332 children, provided child care in Anchorage. Even with families leaving Anchorage, Child Care Connection, the local resource and referral agency, estimates Anchorage's current need to be a licensed capacity of 5,000 children in family child care.

Current data and future projections indicate an urgent need to recruit more family child care providers.

Resource and referral agencies should receive incentive grants to recruit, initially train and help develop a continuing training program for family child care providers.

Not enough family child care homes exist to accommodate the needs of parents who work.

Range of Care: 47

A system of accessible child care must be designed to meet the varied needs of all of Alaska's working parents and those in job training. It should serve school children, children with special needs, infants and toddlers and mildly sick children. Low-income families especially need additional assistance for affordable, quality care so parents may remain in Alaska's work force. Urban and rural families need access to quality care.

Families with children with disabilities need child care as much as other families, but in Alaska too few facilities meet their special needs. The number of children with special needs is predicted to increase dramatically in the next decade because of advances in modern medicine and the unmet needs and problems of pregnant mothers. Besides providing suitable care for children who need it, placing children with special needs in licensed programs can significantly improve their ability to enter the public school mainstream later.

Quality is of special interest in infant care programs. Babies need appropriate stimulation from the same caregiver every day; continuity is important for all children but especially for infants.

Mildly sick children, whose ailments are not highly contagious, need care if their parents work. Unless a friend or family member is available to stay with a sick child, current options are limited and often undesirable: take leave and stay with the sick child; send the sick child to school or child care; leave the sick child home alone. Alaska has facilities, like the St. Jude's Center in Juneau, where mildly sick children are easily cared for along with other children. Other programs should be created based on these models.

A full range of child care services must be made available for parents needing out-of-home care for their children. This range should serve infants and toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, children with special needs and mildly sick children.

"Children don't start learning at age 5 and they don't stop at 3:00 p.m."

—Sue Oliphant, Latchkey Program, Auke Bay School, Juneau

School-age Child Care: 48

Child care can be very difficult to locate for the growing number of young school children who care for themselves in the morning and afternoon while their parents work. This situation can be dangerous. In addition to loneliness, boredom and fear, some children risk accidents and abuse by other children and adults. Being left alone can also have life-long negative effects on children's adjustment, school achievement and self-image.

Child care for school children is difficult for working parents to arrange. No statewide system addresses the need. In 1987, the Community Schools program helped provide care for school children in 27 public schools in the state. Budget cuts eliminated approximately 75% of the Community Schools professional staff who had expertise to run such programs. Growing numbers of private centers also care for children before and after school because demand has increased. We need to ensure that all these programs are safe and healthy for children.

A network of affordable care programs for school-age children should be developed throughout the state. Public schools should coordinate and collaborate with local private child care providers and parents. Schools should dedicate adequate developmentally appropriate space available for before and after school care. Technical assistance, training and other support should be provided through the Department of Education's Community Schools program, resource and referral agencies and others to encourage new program development. Community Schools funding should be reinstated to coordinate school-age care.

Head Start: **49**

Head Start is the most well-known early childhood program in the country. Children in centers are usually served four hours a day, four days a week in this comprehensive program designed 20 years ago to give low income children in America a better start in life. Head Start's 1986 estimated cost in Alaska was $4,067 per child, funded by the federal and state governments. Though the program serves 1,700 children in Alaska, a waiting list contains 915 other eligible children and 65 other communities requesting a program. In addition, there are rural communities that have too few children to operate a program though they are eligible under federal guidelines.

Many low-income families do not attempt to be placed on Head Start waiting lists because child care is not available before and after the program and on days when the program is not open. Kid Corps, which operates five Anchorage Head Start programs, is developing an integrated Head Start and child care program, which could serve as a model for future programs.

"A $1 investment in quality preschool education with low income children returns $4.75 to the state, because of lower costs of special education, public assistance, and crime."

—Report of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families of the U.S. House.

The state should make Head Start services available to all of Alaska's eligible children and their families. For eligible families who cannot participate because of additional child care needs, the state should assist Head Start programs to develop integrated child care systems so parents could continue employment or job training while their children are served cooperatively by Head Start and child care centers and homes. In communities with too few children to establish a Head Start program, assistance should be provided so school districts or other community-based organizations can offer this model program for young children and their families.

Many low-income families do not attempt to be placed on Head Start waiting lists because child care is not available before and after the program and on days when the program is not open.

4. PARENT SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Good parenting is both art and science. This skill can be improved through training and mutual support. Programs need to be available to assist parents with day-to-day support and nurturing of their children. Though one of the most important adult functions, parenting is rarely learned except through trial and error. Frequently parents raise their children the way they were raised.

Community agencies, churches, employers, programs and schools can assist parents to do their job if parents, teachers and the people who work with children understand and cooperate in their roles. The effectiveness of community programs can be enhanced through cooperation in parenting. All parents are under stress at times. Parents can learn to deal more effectively with their emotions and children and thus provide healthier care and avoid abuse and neglect. Parents and child care personnel can help each other care for children if they understand each other and learn to work together. Prevention can avoid costly treatment later.

Parent Support: 50

Child care in Alaska, at home and away, will be considerably improved if additional parenting classes are made more widely available. Teen parents need the support and assistance parenting courses offer. Grade school children can more effectively deal with their young siblings and peers if they understand early child development. Young parents with little previous experience with infants and children can expand their abilities to cope with stress and learn how to help their children develop in healthy and productive ways.

Infants with special needs are most at risk from inadequate or non-existent care. Early help and support for the parents of infants with special needs will save the state significant money in the future as demonstrated by the success of the home-based Infant Learning Program, which identifies infants between birth and age 3 with special needs and infants at risk and provides services in the home.

(Continued on Page 63)

Alaska should adopt and fund a comprehensive parent support and training program. High-risk families should be especially encouraged to attend training programs through financial incentives. Many community organizations such as churches, hospitals, public and private employers and volunteer organizations should be encouraged to offer parenting classes. Model programs and curricula should be available at a low cost.

Help and ideas are offered through group discussions, home visits, parent-child activities, quality early childhood services, lending libraries of books, toys and other learning materials, events for the entire family and special programs for parents of infants, working parents and multiple stress families.

The most successful programs during the period from birth to age 5 have certain basic characteristics, David Hamburg, president of the Carnegie Corporation, told Congress. He testified that they start early, involve parents substantially in the effort for the long term, strengthen natural social support networks, provide educational activities for young children that have a moderately stimulating quality and sustain contact with mothers and children over relatively long periods.

Parent support and education are an important part of a quality child care system in Alaska and are an effective way to strengthen our families. States such as Minnesota, Missouri, Connecticut and Maryland offer such programs.

In Minnesota, for example, the program's primary goals are to support parents in their efforts to raise children, offer child development information and alternative parenting techniques, help create effective communication between parents and children, supplement children's discovery and learning experiences and promote positive parental attitudes throughout a child's school years. This successful program is available to all Minnesotans and shows how such community-based parent training in Alaska can be an important part of strengthening families.

As part of education reform, a number of states have established parenting education and support programs to prevent school failure. The National Governors' Association's recent report, "The First Sixty Months," also focuses on the need for early preventive intervention and highlights programs underway in 19 states, many of which include substantial family involvement. Several states have provided financial inventives for families most in need of support and least able to afford it.

The primacy of the family's role in child development is indisputably one of the most important American values. We in Alaska must support and nurture our families in order to nurture our children. *(See Recommendation 1, page 15.)*

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Media Campaign: **51**

A campaign is needed to raise parents' awareness of good parenting techniques.

Audio, video and print media should be encouraged to deliver more parenting advice and skills to their audiences.

Up until the establishment of village high schools, people in their teen years had been for the most part absent from small rural communities. This means that for at least three generations the art of raising teens was not passed down. Prior to public education, this segment of the population was being educated in traditional roles—hunter, household maker, etc. They had a definite slot to fit into. Come 1976, parents couldn't even turn to their parents or grandparents for advice. . . .

I believe the extreme problems happening now in rural Alaska are a result of this neglect. In a lot of cases, the problem people are graduates from the Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA), young people who have modeled after the alcohol abusers, which means they have perpetuated the other problems of beaters, sexual offenders, child abusers, etc.

This should not be construed to mean I think the REAAs have failed. All communities are glad to have their youth at home and most of the students are pleased with their education. The problem is that parents are frustrated at the lack of control they feel they have of the youth. They don't know how to guide them. Parents have no role models either.

—Letter from Sherry Ruberg, Program Director, Aleutian Region School District

YOUTH ISSUES: Introduction

A statistical snapshot of Alaska's youth freezes one moment, which may or may not accurately reflect life's moving picture. A series of such snapshots of Alaska's youth during the past decade would show movement hard to deny. The snapshots would picture a generation of young Alaskans falling behind their peers nationally because they are not ready socially and economically to be self-sufficient or contribute to community economic self-sufficiency.

This generation is at risk.

The statistics tell only part of the story, but an important—and disturbing—part. In the next section, covering youth issues, we present information that shows Alaska's young people are at or near the top nationally in their rates of experiencing family violence, attempting and completing suicide, abusing substances, running away from home, becoming pregnant and parents while teenagers, and dropping out of school.

The snapshots would picture a generation of young Alaskans falling behind their peers nationally because they are not ready socially and economically to be self-sufficient or contribute to community economic self-sufficiency.

This generation is at risk.

What I want to do is establish a system that prepares the children of this state to enter into the world of economic self-sufficiency. What we want to do is remove the barriers that stand in the way of children to enter into the economic world that we're going to face in the future. . . .

We have a long-term goal here to make sure that we do everything we can to see that our youth are healthy and well-adjusted and able to enter the world of the future. It's going to be a world in which the government is going to be able to offer less security than has been the case in the past. It's going to be a world in which individual incentive is going to account for a whole lot more than dependence on the government.

—Remarks by Governor Steve Cowper to the June 12, 1987, meeting of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth in Juneau, Alaska.

Basic academic and vocational preparation is one part of being economically ready for a productive adulthood. Other parts are the self-esteem of youth, their connection to families and communities, their freedom from victimization and despair. Alaskans must do more to create these conditions for our youth too.

National estimates are that 15% of American youth are disconnected from their families, schools and communities. By the indications we present, Alaska's youth are at even greater risk of becoming disconnected. Our recommendations respond to this high risk and to the trends and facts that make Alaska unique and the challenge particularly great.

One trend is our birth rate, the second highest in the nation. Already, one in three Alaskans is under 18, compared to the national rate of one in four. Our high birth rate and young population means we can count on a youthful population for some time. We also have the nation's second highest divorce rate, meaning that most of Alaska's families, and the children in them, will experience family

breakup and transition. Our recent history of boom and bust economic cycles, along with common seasonal swings in employment and unemployment rates, rounds out a picture of a state that is rich in natural resources but lacks real economic stability and struggles to overcome pervasive family breakup and cultural conflict.

All youth and their families live with these trends in Alaska. The additional challenge of cultural change and the stress it has brought during the last 30 years, however, is as deep and significant for Native cultures as the Industrial Revolution was 100 years ago. The subsistence tradition is a viable option for many Native youth, but we heard elders who worried that Native youth were not learning it. Attending college or other new options are possible choices too, but we heard other Native leaders who worried that their children were not learning this either. For some, walking in two worlds is possible; for others, choices must be made. Where will Native youth live, what will they do, what relationship with their villages or their families in urban areas will they have, and what will they in turn teach their children?

We have focused often on the concerns of Native youth and families, but another trend all Alaskans experience is a broadening of our ethnic diversity. Increasing numbers of Hispanics, Filipinos, blacks and other ethnic groups with their own cultural heritage, and their own particular experiences with success and discrimination, add to our opportunities to strengthen cultural appreciation and richness, or to the risk of limiting self-esteem, cultural values and economic opportunities for many.

We cannot "teach" self-esteem in the classroom. Self-esteem can be built only through success and with nurturance from the family and community. Creating and maintaining the conditions in which this elusive trait can develop are at the heart of what we must do to prepare youth of varying backgrounds for the complex future.

The future is not all bleak. Most Alaskans reach adulthood without becoming casualties. The system worked for them and their families, even if tenuously. Our research found numerous policies and programs here and elsewhere that work, examples we can emulate to promote healthy, productive, capable children and youth.

We don't have to start from scratch. We already possess many answers. We've chosen to limit our discussion here to six of the most pervasive—and interconnected—problems our youth face: family violence, suicide, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and parenthood, running away, and dropping out of school. Although each of these problems seems unique, they all have common underlying causes. These causes include the following:

1. inadequate basic academic and life skills;
2. low self-esteem;
3. insufficient emotional connections among youth and their families, schools and communities;
4. insufficient attention paid to individual and cultural differences in values, interests and needs;
5. inadequate resources devoted early enough in children's lives to prevent problems before they occur.

Our recommendations address these causes. The recommendations that follow can help restimulate the concept of healthy communities. We believe communities that can heal from within, using their own emotional and cultural resources, assisted by government's financial resources, are better off in the long run than communities that cannot.

These recommendations are part of a sustained effort we must make from before birth through early childhood and graduation or preparation for careers.

YOUTH: RECOMMENDATIONS

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence passes from one generation to the next with alarming regularity, often escalating in severity. Children in violent homes learn violence much as they learn other behaviors. Witnessing violence teaches that violence is a normal way to solve problems. Family violence today sets a time bomb that will explode years later when abused children become abusers of their own children. Children who watch one parent hit the other repeat the behavior in their own adult relationships or in the community.

Most Alaskan families protect and nurture their members. For many children, however, violence and child neglect within the family create trauma, pain and long-term problems. Family violence is defined as acts of physical or emotional abuse inflicted against children and adults by people who are related or living in the same household, neglect of children by their custodians and parental kidnapping.

Studies have indicated high correlations between child abuse and deviant behavior among violent juvenile delinquents and adults who committed violent crimes. Most violent criminals were severely physically or sexually abused as children. Children raised in violent homes often have low self-esteem, and alcohol or other drug problems. They often run away and are suicidal. Preventing and treating family violence is imperative if society is to cut the intergenerational connections between violent behaviors. Family violence cannot be tolerated.

"The only truly effective counter to senseless hate is senseless love—the more the better."

—Tom Anthony, Youth at Risk program, Anchorage

- The Division of Family and Youth Services receives 20,000 child abuse and neglect reports a year. Although many are unsubstantiated, this heavy volume creates a caseload for social workers that is three to five times the national average.
- 19,000 Alaska women were abused by their partners in 1986; 63% of those women had children who were abused.
- The number of children receiving child protective services statewide increased 20 percent in just one year from 7,700 in 1985 to 9,200 in 1986.
- Sons who witness their fathers' violence have a 1,000% greater chance of becoming abusers than those who do not.
- Adult sex offenders say they committed two to five times as many offenses as the number for which they were charged and they usually started as juveniles.
- Children under 10 are most likely to be molested by a relative.
- Programs funded by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault annually serve approximately 2,500 children who have either witnessed or been victims of family violence.

Victims of Family Violence: 52

Child abuse and neglect can and does result in death or life-long problems. The degree of harm depends on the child's age, the relationship between the child and the offender, the nature and length of the abuse or neglect, how disclosure is handled, and the support and assistance the child receives. Children who are victims need counseling, protective services and other therapy to alleviate their pain.

The Division of Family and Youth Services can only handle emergency abuse cases because of a traditional shortage of child protection caseworkers and recent funding cuts. For the same reasons the agency cannot handle neglect cases. Yet, we know that child neglect has serious, long-term consequences. The division needs additional funding to lower average caseloads to 50, still more than double the level recommended by the Child Welfare League of America.

Funds are also needed for more Department of Law personnel to increase the proportion of abuse cases that are litigated or prosecuted and to offer additional child protection services.

Community-based, intensive counseling services in families' homes protect children while simultaneously strengthening their families and avoiding unnecessary removal of the child from the home. These cost-effective community services have not been sufficiently funded.

Increases in services are necessary but not sufficient. Greater interdepartmental recognition of the relationship of domestic violence, child protection and child custody issues should be reflected in policies and programs.

Increased resources should be made available to protect, support and treat children who are victims of physical or sexual abuse, or neglect.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Witnesses to Family Violence: 53

More than 1,700 children served by programs funded by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault have witnessed violence. Such children are more likely to develop problems. In a violent home, fear, instability and confusion often replace the love, comfort and nurturance children require for normal, healthy development. Children who live in violent homes often suffer from anxiety, depression, guilt and confusion.

Although shelter and safe home programs funded by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault serve children from violent homes, inadequate funding is available to assure a full range of services in all of the state's communities. The following range of services is needed:

- immediate safety through provision of shelter;
- therapy for children;
- education that helps parents learn violence-free discipline and positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, building trust and overcoming fear, problem solving and decision making, obtaining developmental, psychological and medical screening for children, nurturing behavior towards children and self and improvement of self-image and self-esteem;
- continuing support to women with children who leave shelters;
- a parent-aide program similar to those used in child abuse and neglect treatment programs to guarantee follow-up for these children.

Increased crisis intervention and aftercare services of greater variety should be made available for children and youth who live in violent homes. Judges should thoroughly consider the impact of violence in the home on children and youth when deciding custody disputes.

Children who live in violent homes often suffer from anxiety, depression, guilt and confusion.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Children's Trust Fund: 54

Alaska is one of the last states to consider creating a children's trust fund. Funding will be relatively meager unless a proportion of various fees is also committed to the fund. The trust fund must supplement departmental budgets so it can finance preventive efforts often short-changed in the budget process. Prevention efforts focus on maintaining conditions that lower the risk of abuse in families as compared with currently funded programs that intervene in families where abuse has already occurred or is a high risk.

A children's trust fund should be established and administered by a free-standing board that seeks new funding for child abuse and neglect prevention programs. The fund should be separate from and in addition to state departmental budgets and responsibilities.

The trust fund must supplement departmental budgets so it can finance preventive efforts often short-changed in the budget process.

Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force: 55

Sexual offenses committed by youth under 18 have been increasing nationwide. Jailed adult sex offenders admit to committing two to five times as many sex offenses as those for which they were apprehended. First offenses started as early as age 8, and the severity of offenses tended to escalate. Identifying and treating these youths will reduce offenses against other children now as well as prevent today's children from becoming tomorrow's adults who abuse their children.

Treating the juvenile sexual offender often offers the opportunity to treat a victim since offenders have often been victims. Because treatment of adult sexual offenders is not very successful, that and prison punishment are the least likely to prevent sexual abuse.

A range of specialists trained in juvenile sex offender treatment or who have become experts through experience is needed. A program to train specialists in treatment alternatives and cultural issues would create a base of skilled clinicians to treat convicted offenders and victims who are potential offenders and begin to break the cycle of child sexual abuse.

A statewide Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force should be established to design a plan to provide services for youth identified as sex offenders or at risk of becoming offenders. The plan should include a treatment philosophy, methods to identify clients and assess their predicted treatment success. The task force should seek funds for treatment and help create a program to train juvenile sex offender treatment specialists.

BACKGROUND RECOMMENDATION

Corporal Punishment: 56

Corporal punishment is now permitted at local option. While the Anchorage, Fairbanks and Matanuska-Susitna schools have banned it, other districts allow it. Corporal punishment—the striking of students as a discipline measure—is used most often on students who need extra help and are already experiencing problems. Corporal punishment is associated with lowered grades and self-esteem and administered more to minority children and boys far out of proportion to their population percentages. The Anchorage Corporal Punishment Task Force found that elementary children are almost always the sole recipients of corporal punishment. The task force also discovered wide variations in reasons for using it in different schools and that some used it more liberally than others.

Corporal punishment is most often a response to fighting. Children are hit to teach them to stop hitting. This practice does not square with our concept of school as a place where reason prevails.

The Alaska State Board of Education should ban corporal punishment in the schools and early childhood programs and offer training in positive, non-physical methods of discipline. Reasonable physical restraint necessary to protect self, others or property would not be prohibited by this ban.

Corporal punishment is most often a response to fighting. Children are hit to teach them to stop hitting. This practice does not square with our concept of school as a place where reason prevails.

Child Protection System: 57

Alaska's rates of child sexual and physical abuse are shocking, as noted above. Because the state does not keep records of assaults and murders by age of victim, we do not know how many of these incidents resulted in criminal charges and convictions. Anchorage alone had 618 child sexual abuse cases in 1986, a rate of 1,042 per 100,000 minor inhabitants, or 6.6 times the national rate of 158 per 100,000. Most professionals in child sexual abuse estimate that the hidden rate of child sexual abuse between five and 10 times greater than the reported rate.

Increased education and public awareness have led to increased reporting and expectations for protection of children and prosecution of offenders. Most reports, even those that are substantiated, do not result in the offender being prosecuted or treatment being made available to the victim. The resulting lack of confidence in the system means that children are victimized twice. They believe no one can or will rescue them or hold their abuser accountable.

Most professionals in child sexual abuse estimate that the hidden rate of child sexual abuse between five and 10 times greater than the reported rate.

The Governor should charge this or a new Commission with an in-depth analysis of how the existing child protection system can be improved. To assist that analysis, law enforcement officials should keep data on reported incidents of assault and abuse, and the court system and the Alaska Judicial Council should keep statistics on sentencing of individuals found guilty of child sexual assault and physical abuse.

TEEN SUICIDE

Little evokes as much a feeling of tragedy that could and should have been averted as a teenage suicide. Parents, school officials and health providers are greatly concerned about the rising number of young people who believe their lives are futile and either attempt or commit suicide.

Young people in their 20s are at highest risk of suicide. Native males that age are at the highest risk. Suicide attempts by younger children can lead to completed suicides if underlying problems that caused the attempt are not relieved. Siblings of suicide attempters are at high risk of modeling the behavior.

Studies of factors that contribute to youth suicide show the following:

- a history of problems back to early childhood,
- an increase of problems related to adolescent development,
- failure connected to high expectations,
- homosexuality, a much larger factor in teenage suicide than either the public or professionals perceive according to Dr. Frederick Hillman of Anchorage,
- a period of days or weeks prior to the suicide of increasing feelings of isolation and hopelessness often precipitated by an acute stress from the loss of a personal relationship, such as death, divorce, change in residence, breaking up with a boy or girl friend, and
- the use or abuse of alcohol and drugs.

These factors are compounded for Alaska Native youth and young adults by rapid changes experienced in Native life. Prejudice and losses of cultural norms contribute to collective feelings of low self-worth. Studies show a lower suicide rate in more traditional villages than in those that interact more with Western culture.

- Alaska's suicide rate is twice the national average. Among young adult Native men, it is 22 times the national average.
- Between 1983-1985, youth under 19 accounted for 12% of Alaska's suicides.
- For every completed suicide, an additional 110 attempts are serious enough to require medical attention.
- The signs of suicidal patterns are often visible early in the teenage years.
- Cultural conflict is a particular risk for Native youth.

Comprehensive efforts to prevent teenage suicide need to focus on two broad areas:

- Too many children enter adolescence already burdened with a long history of problems.
- Too many troubled adolescents are either unrecognized, ignored, or inappropriately and/or ineffectively treated.

Little evokes as much a feeling of tragedy that could and should have been averted as a teenage suicide.

Community Plan: 58

Suicide prevention is a community responsibility. When a community has a healthy attitude and feels responsible for all of its members, then suicide prevention will come naturally. Factors that increase the despair that leads young people to suicide, such as lack of attention to early childhood development, lack of nurturing, unreasonably high expectations, isolation, loss of cultural norms, prejudice, low self-esteem, and the belief that nobody is listening can be changed by communities so that children and youth are properly cared for throughout childhood and listened to as teenagers.

Communities have the power to change their collective outlook and therefore help young people's outlook for the future.

Every community should create a plan to address problems that lead its young people to despair. This plan should educate parents, young people and the community as a whole about suicide and the need to talk openly about what is happening to teenagers and why. This breaks a conspiracy of silence not to talk about teenage suicide. Approaching suicide prevention as a community responsibility means that the community as a whole can heal from within and take its own action to build a healthy town or village for teenagers and children. Information, education and organization assistance should be available from the departments of Health and Social Services, Education, Corrections, and Community and Regional Affairs.

Prevention Education: 59

When a teacher, social worker, parent or someone in the community notices that a child may be suicidal, people are often unclear what to do about it. Many times after a suicide people will say they knew the child was depressed, had even talked about suicide, but the adults didn't know what to do. Dropping out of school increases feelings of alienation, isolation and hopelessness. Native students are at a high risk for dropping out. High school is where many youth have their only regular contact with adults. For youth who do not get along with their parents, relationships with high school teachers may be their only chance to receive adult support and guidance. All adults in a child's life, including those at school, need to know how to respond and help when a teenager reaches the despair that can lead to suicide.

Adults who work with children and youth must be taught to recognize the early warning signs of depression and youth at risk for suicide and to act to obtain help. The departments of Health and Social Services and Education should jointly develop clear policies and actions for schools to identify, help and refer troubled students before they attempt suicide. Assistance should be provided to schools to respond to other students after a suicide because such plans help reduce the risk of more teenage suicides.

Suicide Prevention Counseling: 60

If we treat suicidal teenagers, they may not complete the attempt. Lower 48 studies suggest that youth who kill themselves have not been in counseling or treatment and are unknown to mental health and service agencies. Preliminary findings show that young people are at high risk for suicide and alcohol-related accidental death. Alcohol is implicated in at least 70% of Native suicides.

Counseling services must be made available to teenagers. Most adolescents who receive treatment can pass through the suicidal crisis with counseling. Then they can receive treatment for the depression. Basic counseling services in the community, through schools, churches, mental health centers and alcohol treatment programs, can serve as a safety valve to prevent suicides. People use these services when they are in crisis.

Basic counseling services need to be available in all Alaska communities to help prevent suicide. These counseling services should be available at schools, churches, teen clubs, mental health centers, and alcohol treatment programs. Mental health and alcohol treatment programs should cooperate closely to set up and operate programs for people in despair and should coordinate responses to suicide threats and attempts. Village health, school and agency people should be trained to deliver suicide prevention services and rural crisis response teams should be created and trained to respond to suicide threats and attempts. These counseling and response services should also be actively available to counsel family and community members after a suicide.

The Commission received a letter with the following account of events in one rural area :

One teenager committed suicide the end of September. The week prior had been a traumatic one in that community, as an arrest occurred in a child sexual abuse case. Several other members in the community were implicated. As a result, the community was in extreme upheaval, then the suicide occurred. While I was there, one threat and one attempt of suicide occurred. Three . . . high school students were among our AFN group and in the process of developing testimony, they really opened up. Last week we've had another threat of suicide, this time from a student in another village. Last summer a young adult there killed himself.

What it boils down to from listening to our students talk about problems in their communities is that most of the same basic problems exist in all of our communities, and from the sounds of the rest of the testimony, around the state as well. It is not news that alcohol abuse is the number one factor in many other problems that affect youth. When describing their feelings in regards to problems, the students repeatedly expressed hopelessness, that they have no control over what adults do or do to them.

Suicide Research: 61

Lack of data on rural and urban teen suicide attempts in Alaska hinders efforts to target prevention and develop appropriate treatment programs. We know that Alaska has an outrageous suicide rate among young Native men. These men did not suddenly develop problems when they turned 20 years old. Similarly, young women in Alaska are attempting suicide in increasing numbers.

Rates of suicide are one measure of social and personal stress and should be compared with other measures, such as rates of violent crimes and children in need of aid to give us a more complete picture of village mental health. The individual's state of mind is partially influenced by the community's state of mind. Unnatural death is not scattered at random across all villages but show a tendency to cluster in some. It happens to vulnerable individuals in the context of their family, community and culture. How whole communities deal with grief and grieving can affect future suicide rates.

By comparing healthy and unhealthy villages we hope to answer several basic questions: What forces in the present and past, particularly contact with Western culture, help explain the current condition of this village? Why are so many young Alaska Native men choosing suicide? What factors contribute to village health? How can we assist healthy villages to stay that way and help unhealthy villages become healthy?

The state should support research to determine what factors account for the dramatic variation in village alcohol-related accident and suicide rates. Appropriate agencies should collect and report data in a consistent manner to analyze it statewide and help determine what factors can be changed to affect community-wide suicide prevention. Crisis response teams should be funded by the state to support communities when a suicide has occurred.

Alaska has an outrageous suicide rate among young Native men. These men did not suddenly develop problems when they turned 20 years old.

Emotional Disaster Response Team: 62

A suicide does not occur in isolation. This is particularly true in small, rural areas where the community is the family. The loss of one or more youth can be just as devastating to a community as a natural disaster.

The Department of Health and Social Services should be funded to stimulate the development of state and regional crisis teams that will be mobilized to assist communities to provide emergency and follow-up counseling services when one or more suicides constitute a catastrophic event.

Families and Friends: 63

Research shows that suicide does not happen in a random fashion and that it has lifelong effects on the families, friends and others who are left. Research also shows that grief and despair can be overwhelming for those close to a suicide victim. Depression, substance abuse and even suicide may follow for those people. Helping families and friends of suicide victims is an important part of a community approach to preventing suicide.

Community mental health centers and rural crisis response teams should develop plans for assisting families and friends of suicide victims and distribute information about self-help groups to them. Programs should focus on active outreach, self-help and supportive counseling, with a special focus on the victim's brothers and sisters.

Care for Suicidal Youth: 64

When adolescents are actively suicidal, it is usually for a short period of time. During this time, it is critical that they be treated in a safe, secure setting. Most rural communities lack such facilities and in some communities where they do exist, such as in hospitals and village clinics, for a variety of reasons they are not used. Placement at Alaska Psychiatric Institute in Anchorage is typical, yet the best treatment should be in the child's own community. A trip to API often requires an overnight stay in a jail before transportation is available and may further alienate and depress the child. Legal difficulties can be encountered when involuntary commitment is sought away from the child's community. Even when commitment is necessary, once the child is no longer actively suicidal API staff are legally required to explore placement in "the least restrictive setting," which ideally should result in continuing treatment in the child's own community.

Communities should actively take a role in caring for their suicidal youth, including use of appropriate secure placements and holding commitment hearings in the community where possible. The state should help small communities develop alternatives to hospitalization such as special foster homes, safe beds and regional residential facilities. These community services should be jointly developed by the communities and the Department of Health and Social Services, not planned for the communities by the department. In the event short-term placement at Alaska Psychiatric Institute is necessary, follow-up with the community and its mental health professionals is necessary.

BACKGROUND | RECOMMENDATION

Mental Health and Alcoholism: 65

Preliminary findings show that the high risk group for suicide and alcohol-related accidental death is the same and that alcohol is implicated in at least 70% of Native suicides.

"We have a real gap here. The worst possible scenario is a child who is emotionally disturbed, maybe 10 or 11 years old and lives in a rural community. That child will probably have to come to the point of either getting in trouble with the law, attempting suicide or succeeding in it before services are offered to him."

—Mary Moses Marks, Special Education Coordinator, Iditarod School District, McGrath

The Department of Health and Social Services should make it a priority to design its services to reflect the fact that alcohol-related and other substance abuse accidental deaths and suicides share many common causes. Closer cooperation is needed between mental health and alcoholism treatment agencies, especially in designing and implementing programs to address underlying problems and in coordinating responses to suicide threats and attempts.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse among Alaska's children is pervasive. Children are provided a powerful negative role model by adults who themselves abuse alcohol, drugs and tobacco. In some families, alcoholism has strong genetic roots and the likelihood of addiction is very high. Other young people turn to substance abuse to relieve the pain of their lives or because they see adults apparently unable to enjoy themselves without substance abuse.

Children and youth in Alaska too easily obtain and use alcohol, other drugs and tobacco products. Cigarettes and untaxed chewing tobacco are available in unsupervised vending machines and in stores where children are allowed, making purchase easy. Because of a lack of law enforcement personnel, laws against drug use are often unenforced, particularly in villages.

Addiction involves others. Alcoholism or drug addiction in a family often becomes the elephant in the living room never to be mentioned. In couples, one partner's efforts to end substance dependency are easily undermined by an unsupportive partner who may need a partner to rationalize his or her own addiction.

Substance abuse costs our society in lost productivity and increases health care costs, crime and accidents.

While the state has a policy on substance abuse, programs to implement the policy have been inadequately funded. Substance abuse is handled inconsistently by communities and schools. Alaska lacks organized and systematic requirements for alcohol and drug abuse treatment for minors who have committed alcohol- and drug-related crimes. Untrained professionals and educators do not often diagnose substance abuse. Parents often do not recognize the effects of their own substance abuse on children.

Affected children, youth and families do not have access to a sufficient variety of prevention and treatment services. The federal government has recently demonstrated its commitment to reducing the harmful use of drugs through the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act. The state must follow suit. The programs funded by the State Office on Alcohol and Drug Abuse have not placed enough emphasis on children and youth. Prevention efforts are limited in scope and do not respond to the problem's severity and dimensions. Early identification and treatment can prevent chronic addiction, but few programs have been established. Few treatment programs exist in Alaska for young people who are substance abusers.

Congress has committed federal drug abuse money to youth through the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, P.L. 99-570. During the next three years, these funds will flow into Alaska for prevention and treatment programs for children, youth and families. The future of this funding is uncertain after that. The State of Alaska must institutionalize this federal commitment. We must declare war on the pervasive substance abuse that robs people of their dignity and their strength.

- Alaska's youth have significantly higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse than Lower 48 peers.
- Alcohol is involved in at least one-fourth of all juvenile crimes.
- Alcohol is involved in at least 70% of Native suicides.
- 8% to 9% of Alaska's youth say they have drug-related problems at school.
- Alaska's Native Fetal Alcohol Syndrome rate is the highest reported in the world.
- One in four children in Alaska estimated to be children of alcoholics are at higher risk of abuse, neglect, suicide, depression and substance abuse.

Substance Abuse Prevention: 66

Alaska has a number of cooperative programs between community providers and school districts, such as the "Here's Looking at You 2000" and "Friday Night Live" resources of the Alaska Council on Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Not all districts have programs, and many do not have the trained staff required to implement this program effectively. Adults must model what they preach about substance abuse. In many communities, the best teachers may be community people who overcame their own addictions or deeply understand the personal and family issues. Substance abuse prevention must be given equal priority to treatment.

Treatment programs should not punish youth recovering from addictions. Approaches such as at Homer High School, where students may stay on sports teams and other activities if they obtain counseling for their substance problems, recognize that connections to peer groups are vital to a young person's mental health. Punishment that removes those connections does not logically lead to successful abuse treatment.

The State Board of Education and local school districts should cooperate with other agencies to expand funding for programs in grades K-12 to prevent substance abuse. Every district should have a plan and be provided the resources to implement it. Programs should use private, non-profits to train teachers in effective programs, instruct students how to say no to drugs, help young people understand the addictive process and how role modeling affects them, provide a mechanism for youth to help youth, and suggest alternate ways of having fun without using illegal substances. School district plans should also include options for assistance for employees with substance abuse problems.

Substance Abuse Treatment Range: 67

Only one adolescent residential substance abuse treatment program in Alaska allows patients to stay up to six months. Several others are beginning, but together these will offer few spaces. Existing programs are not designed to consider specific cultural issues vital to successful treatment of many young people. The special needs of children and youth have only recently received the attention of substance abuse specialists. Historically, service focused on adults and treating the chronically drug- or alcohol-addicted. Research shows that effective substance abuse prevention and intervention must treat the addictive process within families and the abuser.

More funds are needed to expand support groups, outpatient treatment and a variety of residential treatment options for young substance abusers. Alaska Native teenagers need specialized treatment facilities with a staff that comprehends the cultural issues integral to their recovery. All treatment options, from least to most restrictive, must be available so young people benefit from the setting most appropriate to their needs.

Treatment for Children of Abusers: 68

One in four children in Alaska has an alcoholic parent. These children and those whose parents abuse other substances are much more likely to become substance abusers than children with non-substance abusing parents. Breaking this generational cycle requires special attention to these high-risk children.

More grant money is needed to educate and treat children of alcoholics and other substance abusers and dysfunctional families through schools, expanded outpatient treatment centers, support groups and camps for children of alcoholics.

Substance Law Enforcement: 69

Much testimony from around the state concerned the widespread violation of alcohol and drug laws. Current state statutes send a mixed message to youth. When young people see such disregard for the law and a double standard about substance abuse, they come to disrespect existing laws. They also suffer the effects of adult substance use, including domestic violence and child abuse, unemployment, neglect and poor health. Even a small increase in the cost of alcohol has been shown to lessen consumption, particularly among youth. Washington State is considering increasing its taxes and spending the revenue on prevention and treatment of substance abuse. For many young people tobacco consumption is their first experience buying and using substances the law prohibits them from using. Vending machines and tobacco sales in grocery and convenience stores make it possible for children to buy these products anonymously. The Alaska Lung Association discovered recently that even preteens can obtain them easily.

Greater state and local resources and greater emphasis need to be directed to enforcing laws that prohibit selling and providing alcohol, drugs and tobacco to minors. Such measures should include more hiring and effective training of law enforcement personnel, particularly in villages, and enforcement of penalties on adults who purchase for or sell substances to young people. Taxes on alcohol and tobacco should be increased. A review of the statutes regarding marijuana use should be conducted. Laws should require that cigarettes and chewing tobacco be sold in a restricted manner requiring adult supervision and preventing sale to children.

"Most children from substance abuse families do not know how to play. Life is far too serious to have developed that skill."

—Bette O'Moor, Executive Director, Alaska Council on Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Anchorage

Withholding Privileges: 70

Youth participate in substance abuse for many reasons, including the desire to appear adult, please their peers, or escape boredom, pain or depression. The illegality of alcohol or drug use discourages few youth from substance use. Some states have enacted laws that delay the time when a youth can obtain a driver's license if that youth has consumed illegal substances. These states have found these so-called "use it and lose it" laws to be an effective deterrent. Other states have involved teen idols and other youth in education and training programs to provide role models for teens to say no to drugs.

Alaska should enact legislation that more effectively discourages substance use by withholding or delaying youth privileges such as driver's licenses. Communities and schools should involve youth and respected leaders in programs that help youth make wise choices about drugs in their lives.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: 71

When a pregnant woman uses alcohol, drugs or tobacco her newborn is at high risk of injury. Alcohol addiction is a part of daily life for many pregnant women in Alaska., When a pregnant woman is part of a family or community where alcohol abuse is the rule rather than the exception or when she or her partner are addicted to alcohol, the sad result is often a baby born with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or fetal alcohol effect.

A baby with FAS can be born prematurely, at low birth weight and require extraordinary medical attention, special care through preschool, special education programs in school and potentially lifelong residential care in severe cases. These burdens on families and service providers can be prevented by addressing causes before and during pregnancy. Medicaid spent more than $4.6 million in Alaska for 96 infants in newborn intensive care in 1986. Many of these infants had FAS.

Agencies involved in delivering substance abuse services should guarantee voluntary residential treatment programs for pregnant women who choose an alternative to drinking during pregnancy. Public education should continue to be provided regarding the effects of substances including alcohol, drugs and tobacco on the health of a woman and her fetus.

TEEN PREGNANCY

Teenagers who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, don't go to school, have difficulties in school, are unemployed or live with only one parent begin sexual activity earlier and are less likely to use contraception than other teenagers. Alaska Natives are affected far out of proportion to their percentage of the population. While divorce and single parenting cut across ethnic and economic lines, Alaska's divorce rate is 60% higher than the national average, second only to Nevada's, and no one comes here to divorce.

Although family life and sex education alone cannot prevent teenage pregnancy, national research shows that states with a higher proportion of high school seniors who have taken sex education have white teenage pregnancy rates 5 points lower than other states. Across and within Alaska's school districts the timing and comprehensiveness of health, sex and life skills education varies widely.

Low birth weight accounts for two of every five Alaska infant deaths. Teenagers have a higher risk of bearing low birth weight babies because of their physical immaturity and because they receive significantly less adequate prenatal care compared with older women.

More than a third of Alaskans are under 18, and the state has the second highest birth rate in the country. Unless we take strong and clear actions now, teenage pregnancy in Alaska will increase and so will the social and economic problems that accompany it: school dropout, unemployment or low wage employment, infants enrolled on Aid to Families of Dependent Children with higher than national rates of anemia and fetal alcohol syndrome, child neglect, single parenting and unstable marriages. These problems cost us money. So teenage pregnancy is a major emerging threat to Alaska's economic health.

- Alaska's teenage pregnancy rate is 13% higher than the national average, the ninth highest in the country.

- The Native teenage pregnancy rate is estimated at 70% higher than the national average.

- Alaska's infant mortality rate is ninth highest in the nation.

- The children of teenagers account for 10% of births, but they account for 16% of infant deaths.

- Only 41% of non-white and 50% of white Alaska teenagers receive adequate prenatal care, resulting in low birth weight babies with a higher chance of death.

- While improvement has been made, Alaska still serves only 27% of those eligible for the federal Women and Infant Care program that provides basic nutrition, education and other services, placing us 48th lowest in the nation.

Adolescent Health Clinics: 72

Comprehensive, adolescent health clinics in or linked closely to schools have reduced teenage pregnancy rates by 30% to 50% in from 18 months to three years. These clinics also offer a major advantage: ease of access. Many teenagers do not plan well, have ready transportation or the funds to obtain health care in scattered locations. School clinics greatly reduce these barriers.

While contraceptive counseling or contraception has been a debated program of these now more than 100 clinics in the U.S., visits for non-family planning reasons account for two-thirds or more of clinic visits. Students seek general health care, including weight reduction, athletic physicals, stress reduction, cancer screening, and ear exams, not just or even mainly family planning. At a per student annual cost of about $150, they are cost-effective.

The departments of Health and Social Services and Education should jointly fund and monitor a program of pilot comprehensive adolescent health clinics in schools. The clinics should offer a broad array of services related to general physical and mental health, family planning and substance abuse prevention.

Comprehensive, adolescent health clinics in or linked closely to schools have reduced teenage pregnancy rates by 30% to 50% in from 18 months to three years.

BACKGROUND **RECOMMENDATION**

Teenage Prenatal Care: 73

A comprehensive prenatal and infant care program is essential to ensure nutritional and medical care needs for healthy pregnancies and healthy children. In 1986, the U.S. Congress broadened states' ability to provide this care for poor women and their children and appropriated federal dollars to match state dollars. Families with incomes up to the poverty level can be included. Alaska has the ninth highest infant mortality rate in the nation, and the highest rate of postneonatal mortality. Low birth weight, which is significantly reduced by good prenatal care programs, is responsible for 40% of Alaska's infant deaths. Alaska's teenagers, just 50% of whom receive adequate prenatal care now, are more likely to have low birth weight babies. The new federal option allowed under the Sixth Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (SOBRA) has already been adopted by more than half the states. If adopted in Alaska, an estimated 974 additional women would receive pregnancy and postpartum coverage, and 5,000 children would have medical insurance coverage under Medicaid for their first five years of life. For every $1 spent on women at high risk of having low birth weight babies, $3.40 is saved in the surviving infant's first year of life alone.

Comprehensive prenatal care programs for teenagers and low income women should be created and funded through expanded Medicaid coverage options allowed under SOBRA. The programs would ensure medical care, access to community social services, adequate nutrition, and emphasize home visits to teenage parents by public health nurses or lay companions during the last three months of pregnancy through an infant's first birthday. The visitors should teach parenting skills and monitor the health of mother and infant.

A comprehensive prenatal and infant care program is essential to ensure nutritional and medical care needs for healthy pregnancies and healthy children.

Child Care for Teenage Parents: 74

Teenagers who become parents simply cannot stay in school without adequate child care. Teenage pregnancy is the primary reason young women drop out of school. While research shows that a teenager who drops out also has a higher chance of then getting pregnant, a teenager who first gets pregnant and then drops out has half the chance of ever completing her diploma. The occupational, parenting, health and social effects of that failure are well-documented.

Funds need to be appropriated to support a variety of child care options for teenage parents. Teenagers who are not yet parents can also learn parenting skills and the enormous demands of young children if child development centers are housed in schools. Parenting and life skills education that teenage parents receive in school can be made more realistic in the real setting of a good center.

Child care and other supports for teenage parents should be provided to enable them to stay in school.

Teenagers who become parents simply cannot stay in school without adequate child care.

Sex Education and Family Planning Services: 75

Alaska's gonorrhea rate is seventh in the nation and our teen pregnancy rate is the ninth highest. AIDS is an emerging issue in our state as well. Despite these facts, and our best intentions, half of all teens have sexual intercourse before they leave high school. Since research shows that only one-third of sexually active teens regularly use contraception, an increase in contraceptive education as well as increased funding for family planning services for teens is essential as part of a comprehensive pregnancy prevention plan. Education can provide the skills to make choices about sexuality and a forum for discussing the health and emotional risks of early sexual involvement, as well as information about contraceptives that includes both risks and benefits in preventing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Preventing pregnancy among those teens who choose not to abstain is an important goal.

Education about sexuality should be more widely available to teenagers, as should family planning counseling and services to help prevent pregnancy. These programs should stress the health and emotional risks of early sexual involvement and ways to prevent pregnancy and disease if youth choose to engage in sexual activity. Education for parents to help them as sex educators of their own children should also be supported to help delay the onset of sexual activity and improve family communication.

RUNAWAY YOUTH

No child is safe on the streets. Runaways have a higher likelihood of committing suicide, becoming pregnant, dropping out of school, abusing drugs and becoming juvenile prostitutes. While as a group runaways are not more likely to commit other types of crimes, chronic runaways are more likely to engage in violent crimes and crimes to support themselves.

In Alaska, statewide statistics are spotty and of limited accuracy. In Anchorage, reasonably reliable and valid data collected for 1985 indicate that about 11% of Anchorage youth, about 3,600, were at risk of becoming runaways, or "throwaways," children literally cast out on the street.

Runaways have a higher likelihood of committing suicide, becoming pregnant, dropping out of school, abusing drugs and becoming juvenile prostitutes.

Substance abuse, family breakup, another family member having run away, high amounts of total life stress increase the chance a youth will run away from or be thrown out of home. For all runaways, throwaways and their families who do not receive effective help, the likelihood is that a cycle of being victims and victimizers will be created at enormous personal and social cost. Past efforts to deal punitively with runaways and throwaways without appropriate follow-up services have been shown ineffective. The state should help keep families together when appropriate through a variety of support services that recognize the family as the basic unit of society.

- Urban statistics show a runaway rate in Alaska several times the national average.
- At least two-thirds of runaway youth say they have been abused at home.
- 80% of runaway youth say family problems led to their running away.
- 25% of runaways may become chronic, habitual runaways who are more likely to become criminals.
- Runaways and throwaways are much more likely to become teenage prostitutes, victims of suicide and drug abusers than non-runaway youth.
- Each year, at least 1,100 runaway youth are reunited with their families in Anchorage alone.

Comprehensive Runaway Program: 76

No state agency is responsible for or now has all the resources needed to deal with all runaways and throwaways. The Division of Family and Youth Services is responsible for runaways or throwaways who have been abused, who have broken the law or who choose to accept the services available through the division. An abused runaway or a runaway who accepts services is handled by Family Services and a runaway who violated the law would be handled by Youth Services. Children whose only crime is substance abuse are often not adjudicated, leaving them to make crucial decisions about their lives in a drug-induced haze. Even the child who makes it into the social services system often will be treated with an uncoordinated, hit-or-miss approach. Agency response is minimal or non-existent for runaways who are not abused, who have not broken the law or who refuse to accept services. Runaway and throwaway children are at the mercy of the streets, unprotected.

A new comprehensive program should be developed to serve runaways, throwaways and their families. This Department of Health and Social Services unit would combine the now separate functions of Family Services and Youth Services to diagnose, develop a treatment plan for runaways, throwaways and their parents, and provide crisis intervention and referral to other community resources. Unit members would include probation officers, social workers and a mental health clinician. A data tracking system should also be developed with appropriate client confidentiality safeguards.

Runaway and throwaway children are at the mercy of the streets, unprotected.

Family Counseling: 77

Families experiencing divorce have an especially high risk of a runaway child. In Alaska, approximately seven of 10 marriages end in divorce as opposed to the national figure of five of 10. Insufficient funds are devoted to counseling families at high risk of having a runaway, especially for families experiencing divorce. Earlier screening, home visits with identified high risk families and special incentives for parents to learn parenting skills, a job for which few of us ever train, would increase this prevention effort. Additional efforts would include modest support for groups of largely volunteer parents willing to offer parent support groups and for resources such as a statewide, toll-free, parents only, 24-hour crisis line.

Resources should be made available to existing community and state agencies and the private sector to increase youth and family counseling and education services provided to families in divorce, single parents and stepfamilies.

Insufficient funds are devoted to counseling families at high risk of having a runaway, especially for families experiencing divorce.

Shelter, Emancipation and Independent Living Programs: 78

Runaways are a diverse group with diverse reasons for running away from home. They need diverse services. Most runaways eventually reunite with their families. Some need independent living programs because returning home is either impossible or inappropriate.

In Anchorage, the only options for a family dealing with a runaway are for the youth to return home, be placed in a short term shelter, or be committed to Alaska Psychiatric Institute if "gravely disabled or suffering from mental illness." Very few beds are available for youth neither delinquent nor in state custody—perhaps 10 at most. A new shelter, Covenant House, is being developed with state and private support, but this facility will focus more on the 16 and older runaway, as well as more chronic runaways, still leaving gaps in service for younger, first or second time runaway youth. More shelter space is needed, with short and longer stays possible, since now only a one-or two-week shelter stay is possible.

In addition, older Alaska teenagers who are emotionally, socially and economically competent to lead an independent life have often left home to seek employment especially in boom periods. However, Alaska statutes do not define the conditions, including age, that a juvenile must meet to be declared competent to lead an independent life. Alaska statutes need to be changed to define the competency a juvenile must demonstrate to be emancipated and to allow youth to be placed in a program where they are not under direct supervision.

Supervised independent living programs for older youth who can or should not return home practically do not exist. A modest increase in funding for these youth, and the statutory change needed, could prevent further child protection and juvenile justice problems.

A broader variety of shelter programs offering brief to long stays should be funded for runaways and throwaways who are not delinquent or in state custody.

The Legislature should define the criteria for emancipation of minors.

The state and licensed agencies need more funds and changes in the law to allow them to place youth in independent living programs.

Runaways are a diverse group with diverse reasons for running away from home. They need diverse services.

Reunited Families: 79

Most runaway programs are devoted to crisis intervention. Once a runaway youth has been reunited with his or her family, a second running away might occur if family members' behaviors and interactions remain the same. Since 80% of runaways say family problems caused them to run, the family system needs help to prevent repeat runaways. In Anchorage alone, at least 1,100 runaways are estimated to return home each year, indicating a large need for aftercare. Mediation between runaways and family members works. Special attention should be devoted to the siblings of runaway youth, since they are also at high risk for becoming runaways.

Programs should be funded to help families reunited with a runaway or throwaway child after the reunion, particularly to counsel other children in the family.

DROPOUTS

Young people who don't complete high school become an economic drain on their community and state. They lack the basic skills to compete for and succeed in the jobs that will expand most during the next 20 to 30 years. Experts expect that nationally there will be far fewer low-skill, high-paying jobs. More than 80% of the jobs in 2000 will be in the service sector, many of which we haven't even imagined yet.

In Alaska, we're all familiar with stories of teenagers who quit school in the oil boom years to make a bundle on the North Slope. No such option exists today or is likely to exist for a generation. People with few skills will be stuck in low paying jobs at best. At worst, they will be regularly or permanently unemployed. Collectively, the armed forces reject 600,000 out of 1.8 million applicants annually now because these young men and women don't have the technical skills or can't be trained cost effectively. The costs of health and social fallout from poor school completion rates and low skill levels among many graduates will amount to many times more than the costs of preventing these problems. Dropping out of school is one of the strongest predictors of future social dependency.

- Alaska graduates two-thirds of its youth by their 18th birthday, making it the 37th lowest state in the nation.

- Although half of those who leave early eventually get a GED or complete school, dropouts cost Alaska as much as $17 million a year in lost revenue and remedial expenditures.

- The majority of people in the nation's jails are dropouts.

- Dropouts are twice as likely to be substance abusers.

- Dropouts are 60% less likely to be employed over the next decade and, when employed, will earn one-third less than graduates.

- Native youth have dropout rates several times higher than non-Natives.

"Alternative schools are more expensive than traditional schools but much less expensive than jail."

—Jerry Hartsock, Principal, McKinley Alternative High School, Fairbanks

Defining Children at Risk of Dropping Out: 80

Students who are at high risk of dropping out or having a marginal school experience are often identified too late to help them effectively. Students who exhibit easily observable behaviors in junior high that we know predict likely dropouts are more likely to receive attention than quieter students or elementary students. Native students are especially at risk of dropping out. In Fairbanks, for example, 72% of 1982's freshman Natives did not graduate four years later.

The State Board of Education should define "children at risk of dropping out of school" and establish minimum standards to help them. An effective system should be developed to identify at least by the fourth grade, students likely to drop out and assist them to successfully complete school. Attendance, performance and literacy should be considered. Parents should be notified quickly of their children's needs.

Alternative Education Programs: 81

Once potential dropouts are identified, too few resources are devoted to effective alternative education and a variety of supportive services. In Fairbanks, for example, alternative junior and senior high schools have lengthy waiting lists for prospective entrants. Studies indicate that 75% to 80% of high risk youth can be saved from dropping out, or returned to school, through flexible alternative programs. California and Oregon have mandated alternative programs in all school districts.

Once a student has left school, sporadic efforts are made to encourage that student to re-enter or to obtain a diploma through correspondence or GED. Helping juveniles who have been jailed to complete their degree is good basic crime prevention, since their recidivism rate is much lower than youth without a high school diploma.

The Legislature should offer financial and other incentives to districts that develop a variety of alternative education programs for students, especially at the elementary level, likely to drop out, as well as re-entry programs for those who have already dropped out.

Once potential dropouts are identified, too few resources are devoted to effective alternative education and a variety of supportive services.

Uniform Dropout Definition: 82

The Alaska State Board of Education does not require that school districts uniformly define and report students who dropout, making overall state figures inaccurate and in-state comparisons difficult. Students who withdraw for reasons related to poor attendance, achievement or social/family conditions are a failure of our system, yet they are frequently not counted as dropouts.

Uniform definition and reporting standards should be developed and monitored so that dropout statistics are comparable across the state. A tracking system, begun with an exit interview with each student who withdraws from school, should be developed and established in and between school districts.

Truancy and Suspension: 83

The primary response to truancy seems to be suspension or expulsion if the truancy becomes too great. To encourage attendance by a student who wants to stay away from school, we prevent that student from attending school. This pours these youth out on to the streets and contributes to runaway and dropout problems. In Anchorage, statistics from the past three years show that attendance problems were the single largest reason for dropping out. Expansion of alternatives like in-school suspension should be considered.

Any punishment that decreases a youth's connection to school or family increases that youth's chances of running away or developing additional problems. Computer dialing to notify parents when their children are absent is not a deterrent, since parents never know an automatic call has been made to their home if a child answers it and does not inform them.

School districts should create local working groups to review truancy and suspension policies. They should encourage enforcement of truancy laws and alternatives to out-of-school suspension and expulsion, such as in-school suspension, community service, home-based instruction, supervised correspondence study and out-of-building programs. Truancy should be treated as early warning of a possible runaway. Parents should be immediately notified of absences.

School districts must not use suspension or expulsion as disciplinary measures except as a last resort.

Multicultural Experiences: 84

Testimony from Native youth underscored the key role that feelings of discrimination and cultural distance play in Native youths' emotional, spiritual and physical health. All young people in Alaska must better understand and respect a variety of cultural traditions to reduce prejudice and discrimination. Native youth have twice the dropout rate of non-Natives, and testimony the Commission heard repeatedly emphasized the role of cultural discrimination in the low self-esteem of many Native youth. Countering this discrimination can help prevent dropout.

Schools should provide more multicultural experiences so students will appreciate their own and other cultures. These experiences should include the study of oral traditions, literary and historical works that communicate basic concepts about cultures, rural-urban exchange programs between teachers, staff and students and similar approaches. Elders should more frequently be asked to teach Native languages, survival skills, crafts and history in schools.

All young people in Alaska must better understand and respect a variety of cultural traditions to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

ISSUES WE DID NOT TACKLE:

Children in poverty in Alaska

Children in poverty in our state is the single most important issue we could not adequately address. Our children's greatest enemy is poverty. The Children's Defense Fund estimates that 1 in 6.5 Alaskans under 18 live in families whose income is below the poverty line. Poor children are far more likely to be victims of the problems we've discussed at length in this report—inadequate child care services, dropouts, substance abusers, runaways, pregnant and parenting teens, suicides.

Across the nation, older and younger Americans have switched places over the last 20 years. Children are now the age group most likely to be poor and those over 65 the least. Allocation of resources partly accounts for this deterioration of children's status. Federally, it's estimated that we spend 30% of our national budget on older people, versus 3% to 5% on those under 18. In Alaska, the Legislative Research Agency concluded in spring 1987 that over the last few fiscal years we have been spending six to eight times more on seniors for discretionary programs than we have for children.

Defining the broader economic development strategies basic to reducing poverty and lessening its effects in Alaska is beyond the scope of our work. We can appropriately address, in our future work, strategies in three areas that can help children keep or get out of poverty: welfare reform; ways to mitigate the economics of divorce; and the employability of young people in an economy that has a greater diversity of job opportunities.

Welfare Reform

Welfare reform is the catchword for legislative proposals aimed at moving people from welfare dependency into economic independence and for preventing welfare dependence. The original Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) system was designed for widows and orphans. Yet today, the system increasingly serves single mothers, particularly unmarried teen parents, and their children. Half of the more than $12 billion spent by the federal government on AFDC in 1983, for example, went to families in which the mother had her first child as a teenager. In Alaska each month, the food, shelter and medical care of 12,000 children are met by AFDC.

Welfare reform offers mothers and children on welfare the following services:

1. Remedial education to provide basic skills in reading and writing or learning English, so welfare recipients can compete for jobs. Recipients are helped to earn a high school diploma.
2. Training ranging from specific occupational skills to how to fill out a job application and have a positive work attitude.
3. Job opportunities for recipients who are ready to seek work.
4. Support services such as quality, affordable child care, affordable health care and transportation.
5. Case management so one person helps the recipient through the maze of programs and encourages the learning of independence.
6. A social contract or plan in which the obligations and responsibilities of the recipient and the government are spelled out.

For children, welfare reform must extend beyond assisting their parents to move from AFDC to economic independence. Welfare reform must prevent dependency from claiming another generation. One part of welfare reform is helping people get off welfare. The other half is preventing people from ever getting on.

The following welfare reform proposals aim to keep the next generation off welfare:

1. Prenatal health care reduces infant mortality, saving long-term health costs for babies born with developmental disabilities and preventing costly neonatal intensive care.

Children are now the age group most likely to be poor and those over 65 the least.

2. Children's health care from childhood through the teenage years protects our children's physical and emotional health.

3. Family resource programs meet the needs of young parents who feel isolated and frustrated as they try to work and raise children without the extended family or more often, without a spouse. Resources may include child development classes, information and referral services, nutrition counseling, hotlines, peer support groups, parent-child communication skills and positive disciplining techniques.

4. Child care helps move individuals from welfare dependency to independence and helps prevent problems.

5. Recreation provides young people and positive ways to use free time.

A successful welfare reform proposal for Alaska must address the child care needs of AFDC parents, who cannot seek, get trained for, or hold down a job without quality, affordable care for their children. It must address the impact of current policy in Alaska, which provides AFDC only to single parents. Half the states have adopted the AFDC Unemployed Parent option which provides benefits to two-parent families, which keeps families together.

The proposal must address the gap that occurs when many AFDC recipients try to leave the rolls for employment, only to find that they lose Medicaid health coverage yet don't earn enough to afford other health insurance. That alone has kept Alaska families on AFDC rolls longer than necessary. New Jersey's new REACH program incorporates some of these proposals and will be a useful model to watch. In the New Jersey program, the federal government will allow any savings that result from requiring participants with children as young as two years to seek or train for work to be kept and recycled. Child care and transportation are provided. In addition, New Jersey's program allows 600 recipients who agree to become family child care providers to keep a larger portion of their public assistance despite earning income. New Jersey will also keep new workers eligible for Medicaid benefits for 12 months after they become employed.

Finally, a Washington State proposal may offer some lessons on unemployment compensation. This proposal is being implemented with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) participants in Washington and enables individuals to keep their first 90 days of income from starting a new business, without any loss of unemployment compensation benefits.

Mitigating the Economic Impact of Divorce

Children are likely to suffer significantly from a decreased standard of living following divorce. Parents have the primary responsibility to support their children and must make every effort to do so. Child support is a child's right, not a custodial parent's right. Aggressive measures are necessary to enforce this right.

The Alaska Women's Commission study on the economic impact of divorce is clear: divorced women and their children experienced a 33% decline in per capita income following divorce, while divorced men saw their per capita incomes rise 17%. Since Alaska's divorce and birth rates are second highest in the nation, thousands of children are adversely affected here each year. The scope of need can also be measured by noting that, from FY84-FY87, the caseload of the Child Support Enforcement Division increased by 6,000 cases, or an average of 30% each year, with no increase in enforcement personnel.

Child support enforcement is a key ingredient of lessening this economic impact, since women have sole custody nearly 60% of the time and joint about 20%. In 80% of the divorces involving minor children, child support is awarded. Yet, only half of custodial parents receive their full award. The average award is just $191/month, less than half the amount needed for adequate child care.

Civil Rule 90.3, adopted by the Alaska Supreme Court in August 1987, is intended to improve the size of the initial award by making a change from the past. A new presumptive guideline sets aside 20% of the non-custodial

parent's adjusted income for child support. The changes in financial support so awarded should be closely monitored to ensure that this effect is achieved.

Civil Rule 90.3 does not address the non-payment of support. The Alaska Women's Commission study documents the success of the Child Support Enforcement Division in obtaining at least partial relief in the majority of non-payment cases, but the alternative of automatic income withholding deserves review. Wisconsin is among the states that use this procedure, where child support is automatically deducted from paychecks, unlike our present system when a default first has to occur and then a procedure is set in motion to begin withholding.

Finally, we emphasize our previous recommendations on making quality child care affordable and accessible for all working parents or parents in training, especially for single parents. These child care recommendations are an essential part of helping single working parents get and stay out of poverty and improving their children's economic chances.

Youth Employment Options

We believe many of our recommendations will help reduce poverty among future generations of Alaskans, through providing young people with the tools for economic productivity. Recommendations such as the following will help meet that goal:

- increased nurturing of our children through incentives for developing parenting skills;
- preparation of young people through skills for living curriculums that emphasize decision making, problem solving, communication and parenting skills;
- increased opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities through service; and
- increased resources devoted to dropout prevention, early identification of high risk children, and alternative education programs that enable all children to learn basic academic and life skills.

The importance of basic reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking skills cannot be overstated. The National Longitudinal Study of Young Americans found that students in the lower third on performance in these areas were three to five times more likely to become teenage parents than students in the top third. Among poor students with poor basic skills, the chances of pregnancy and teen parenthood were almost identical among whites, blacks and Hispanics. Ensuring basic skills helps directly through increasing ability and indirectly through prevention of dropouts and teen pregnancy.

We must support schools and teachers in teaching students how to learn to learn, not just what to learn. A recent Committee for Economic Development survey of 1,200 corporate leaders found this ability to learn new things, followed closely by problem solving and communication abilities, were the most important factors in getting ahead, at least in those cash-based economies. Districts that expand offerings in such instruction should receive incentives for doing so.

We should rethink our JTPA and Vocational Education programs too. Job specific skills should be taught primarily within a framework of helping learners make critical choices and develop general thinking skills. If curricula have these fundamental qualities, then perhaps the Governor's Council on Vocational Education proposal for allowing high school graduation requirements to be met through appropriate vocational courses would be acceptable and an excellent way to better the readiness of those 70% of youth who do not go on to college. We could focus more on teen parents in our JTPA programs too. They are only an estimated 10% of Alaska's JTPA enrollees, and yet many teen parents are among those most significantly mired in the poverty cycle.

Preventing teen pregnancy and mitigating its effects through policies that help teen parents complete schooling and career training are prime ways to break the poverty cycle. Our recommendations address these issues, and we emphasize that they must be included in the

range of policy options that we hope will significantly reduce and prevent poverty in Alaska.

Addressing the fundamental problem of children in poverty calls for much more in-depth work, particularly in suggesting how, beyond our current recommendations, we can best assist Alaska's Native youth as they inherit a world of mixed cash and subsistence economies, and the different abilities required for success in each. This overview is only a beginning.

Parents at Home

Alaska parents who choose to stay home and to nurture, care and educate their young children also have needs for their children and themselves such as parent support groups; respite care; parks and indoor play areas designed for young children; medical, dental and mental health care; cooperative play groups or schools; quality, affordable, accessible child care in exchange for volunteer hours; and a community that is hospitable to young children and families.

The Commission heard parents plea to have their needs addressed in this report. They are not. For Alaska to have a statewide, first class, child care system, these concerns need to be addressed.

Indian Child Welfare Act

The goal of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is to protect the best interests of Indian children and preserve tribal integrity by reducing the number of Indian children removed from Indian homes. In Alaska, the passage of ICWA has led to a reduced frequency of foster care or adoptive placements in non-Native homes for Alaska Native children and more awareness by state administrators, judges and social workers about the critical roles of culture and the tribe in a Native child's life. The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for ICWA implementation in Alaska.

ICWA provides a needed vehicle for Alaska Native villages to have the power to make significant decisions about the well-being of individual children and to advocate on behalf of all Native children. At least 30 percent of the children in the child protective system of the Division of Family and Youth Services are Alaska Natives.

For more than a year, Alaska Native representatives have been meeting with state social workers and lawyers to negotiate state-tribal agreements about how villages and state social workers can best meet the needs of Native children in daily child welfare practice. This kind of good faith negotiating needs to continue for the act to be fully implemented in Alaska. The issues underpinning the act's implementation have not lent themselves to any easy resolution.

Tribal sovereignty, the relationship between Native villages and the state child welfare system, and various values and laws must be addressed for the act to do the job for which it was intended. If the act's goals are to be achieved, then the socioeconomic conditions of Alaska Natives must be improved.

The implementation of ICWA is too important and complex for the Commission to adequately address in the short time allotted for this initial work. At the same time, the critical issues of ICWA implementation are so important and complex that they must be fully tackled in the Commission's future work. Resolution of those issues are central to the future health and well-being of Native children, families and communities.

BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE: THE NEXT STEPS

"Please designate money in the budget because we are the future."

This Native youth spoke for all Alaska's children and youth. We often call children our greatest natural resource, but we don't often back that statement with hard cash. When we do, we too often spend the money on saving drowning people instead of figuring out why they're falling in the river.

The recommendations in this report are just a beginning to change these priorities, change direction. We have just scratched the surface. In the future, for example, we should also suggest ways of assisting parents who "work" by staying home to raise their children. We should develop better ways to respond to the needs of rural communities. We should talk about how our basic economic policies create the framework in which families can either provide for their children or in which children's basic needs are unmet, leaving them open to a life of emotional risk and economic dependency. We must discuss much more extensively the role of the schools as the one institution through which almost all children pass, about the need to assist the educational system to ensure that children achieve academic excellence as well as develop the whole child. We should consider children with developmental and learning disabilities and how we can ensure that their future is as bright as children without these special needs. These issues and others like them await future Commission work. There is still much to be done.

In the early 1970s, Alaska had an Office of Child Advocacy. In time, it seemed its original purpose had been served, and this voice for children was disbanded. If nothing else, the Governor's Interim Commission on Children

and Youth has learned that Alaska's children need that voice on their behalf. If we are to have equity across generations, children's needs cannot be addressed every 10 years or so with a new Commission or advocacy effort.

We often call children our greatest natural resource, but we don't often back that statement with hard cash.

Ten years from now, Alaska's children still won't be able to vote. Who will speak for them?

This recognition has led the Interim Commission on Children and Youth to the following key recommendation:

Permanent Commission: 85

The Legislature should establish a permanent Commission on Children and Youth to advocate for continuing support for Alaska's children and youth and to address many other issues we did not cover. Other urgent and important issues brought to the Commission that were not addressed because of time constraints deserve the research and discussion we devoted to those issues presented here. These additional issues and our initial work on them are the legacy we pass on.

The Commission would develop a comprehensive service plan for children, youth and family that focuses attention on children and youth and their place on our public policy agenda. This plan would include the full development of an implementation plan for the recommendations in this report. The Commission would also promote prevention efforts aimed at healthy child development and would continue to investigate the important issues this Interim Commission could not adequately pursue. The Commission would also have the following responsibilities:

a. serve as a statewide clearinghouse of model programs and resources for technical assistance,

b. require all departments to identify in the budget process and describe the purposes of the resources they devote to children and youth,

c. prior to each annual legislative session, convene officials and citizen groups to formulate recommendations on proposed legislation or code changes and develop mechanisms to review and coordinate advocacy during the session,

d. advocate for studies and basic data collection on children and youth to fill a distressing amount of gaps in the census data we have on our children. This would also include studies such as the Minnesota Adolescent Health Survey that ask children and youth to tell adults what their perceived needs are so that we can bring an expanded children's voice into the planning process.

If we are to have equity across generations, children's needs cannot be addressed every 10 years or so with a new Commission or advocacy effort.

Washington State and Nebraska, among others, have recently constituted ongoing children's commissions through legislative actions. Their models are available for us to consider.

The critical role of an ongoing Commission would be as a strategic planning nerve center and advocate for children's issues, a place where an opinion can be offered on the impact of government policies on children and families, just as we must prepare environmental impact statements to guide development strategies.

During 1988 and beyond, a permanent Commission will play these roles. In addition, the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth received a federal grant, "Youth 2000," that will enable us to stimulate and

support several pilot projects that put into action some of these recommendations for enhancing youth's economic self-sufficiency.

The critical role of an ongoing Commission would be as a strategic planning nerve center and advocate for children's issues, a place where an opinion can be offered on the impact of government policies on children and families, just as we must prepare environmental impact statements to guide development strategies.

Through these activities, Alaska's children can be assured of having a sounding board at the state level, a body whose principal responsibility would be to ensure quality in children's programs and an ongoing awareness that children's well-being must be high on everyone's public policy agenda. We know that genuine solutions mandate social change. These require committed effort, creativity and innovation to cut across the boundaries that can divide governmental departments from each other, and government from families and community institutions. An ongoing Children's Commission can help bridge these boundaries.

Always, where our children are concerned, we must have a vision. Visions are not always practical, but they represent the best, the ideal we hope for. Apart from our formal recommendations, here are some of the ideals Commission members hoped for our children:

- an adequate income for every Alaskan family to be able to afford shelter, food, care and clothes for children;
- a quality education that instills self-esteem and love of learning in each child and which respects and honors each child's culture and heritage;
- a redesigned world of parks, playgrounds, and child care development centers for small children who live in the world of giants and see everything from the level of our knees so they can look us in the eye;
- a legal system that ensures that the child victim of sexual assault lives in a safe, warm and loving home and under which the perpetrator suffers the consequences of the crime, rather than the child;
- a requirement all parents and teachers to return to school to learn what it is like to be a child and not be able to have any say in solving problems that directly affect you;
- a provision for free parenting classes for every Alaskan with incentives, such as union hours credit towards benefit eligibility, for attending;
- a change of the attitude and understanding of all people in Alaska toward children: government, for all its power and wisdom, is only a reflection of the public will and until the public perception changes we'll only scratch the surface.

That is a vision filled with wishful thinking. But if Alaskans are truly serious about children being our greatest natural resource, if we are truly serious about investing in their future—and ours—then wishful thinking is exactly where we've got to start.

That is a vision filled with wishful thinking. But if Alaskans are truly serious about children being our greatest natural resource, if we are truly serious about investing in their future—and ours—then wishful thinking is exactly where we've got to start.

Profiles of Commission Members

John Antonnen, Ed. D.
Educational background in elementary education and special education, with doctoral training in special education and education administration; has been a school teacher in Colorado, Oregon, Ohio and Alaska; serves as Superintendent of Schools in the Southwest Region, headquartered in Dillingham.

Sen. Johne Binkley
Educated in Fairbanks; served on the Bethel City Council from 1981-1984; elected to the State House of Representatives in 1984 and the Senate in 1986; currently serves as Co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee and member of the Rules Committee and the Children's Caucus.

Blanche Brunk
Educated in Colorado and Hawaii in the fields of nursing and public health, specializing in maternal/child health; has served on the Steering Committee of the Region X Child Abuse and Neglect Resource Center and on the Executive Committee for the Arctic Alliance for People in Fairbanks; currently employed as Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services; formerly employed as a Public Health Nurse with the Fairbanks Health Center, Executive Director of the Resource Center for Parents and Children, Health Aide Coordinator for the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and a Child Abuse Prevention Planner; is a member of the American Nurses Association and Sigma Theta Tau, the National Honor Society of Nursing.

Annie Calkins
Educated in Missouri in philosophy and English; currently employed by the Department of Education as a Language Arts Specialist, Coordinator of the Pacific Rim Sister Schools Program, Sex Equity Coordinator, and is an Early Childhood Specialist; has been a classroom teacher and taught language arts and social studies and has been employed as a Curriculum Director and a teacher/trainer in 7 Alaskan school districts; serves on a task force involved with Early Childhood and Special Education and is the Coordinator for the Alaska Writing Consortium.

Rep. Virginia Collins
Educated in California in the fields of nursing and health science; has served as a member of the Alaska Rehabilitation Association, American Nurses Association and March of Dimes; elected to the House of Representatives in 1984 and 1986; currently serves on the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee and is a member of the Children's Caucus.

Shirley Covington
Educated in California and Texas in the public health field and is a Nurse Practitioner; currently employed as the Health Services Coordinator for the Mat-Su Borough School District; involved with the Mat Valley Child Protection Team, Friends of Families and co-founded the Family Planning Clinic; is currently Acting President and was the first President of the Alaska School Nurses Association.

Sen. Rick Halford
Educated in Alaska in the fields of history and political science; elected to the House of Representatives in 1978 and 1980, and to the Senate in 1982 and 1984; currently serves serves as Co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee and on the Senate Community and Regional Affairs and Judiciary Committees and is a member of the Children's Caucus.

Sandra Holloway-Sykes
Educated in New York and Arizona as a Public Health Nurse; most recently employed as a Counselor with the Family Planning Clinic in Anchorage; has been employed with health and nutrition programs serving women, infants and children in hospital and clinical settings; has been involved with the PTA and youth athletics.

Marlene Johnson

Resident of Hoonah, educated in Juneau; served on the Hoonah School Board for 24 years and the RurAL CAP Board for 9 years; was an original incorporator of Sealaska Corporation, has served on the Board since 1972, and currently serves as President; in addition to service on numerous boards and commissions, has also been involved with the Southeast Health Systems Agency, Hoonah Health Council and the Rural Affairs Council.

Sen. Joe Josephson

Educated in Chicago and is an attorney; served previously on the Anchorage City Council and Borough Assembly; member of the Anchorage Charter Commission, Southcentral Red Cross, Anchorage Council on Drug Aid and the Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; elected to the State House of Representatives in 1962 and 1964 and the Alaska State Senate in 1968, 1982 and 1984; currently serves on the Senate Health, Education and Social Services, Judiciary, and State Affairs Committees and the Postsecondary Education Commission; is a member of the Children's Caucus.

Reggie Joule

Educated in Kotzebue and Fairbanks; currently employed as the Field Coordinator for UAF's Department of Rural Development, College of Human and Rural Development; was formerly employed by NANA Corporation as a Youth Coordinator for the Spirit Program; presently serves on the Board of NANA Corporation, the Alaska Native Foundation and the Governor's Drug Abuse Advisory Board; for 8 years was involved with the organization of the World Eskimo Indian Olympics and served on the Chukchi Community College Advisory Council. Serves as Commission Vice Chair.

Clara Kelly

Educational background in early childhood and nursing; currently employed as the Director of the Southwestern Alaska Council for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; was formerly employed by RurAL CAP as a Parent/Child Coordinator and Field Supervisor, by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation as a Community Health Supervisor, by Bethel Social Services as Director of a nursery and by AFN as Coordinator of a preschool program; born in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and a fluent speaker of Yupik. Elected to Bethel City Council in 1987.

Rep. Niilo Koponen

Educated in New York, Massachusetts, London and Alaska in the fields of education and economics; former teacher, principal, researcher and planner with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District and UAF, and former Director of Fairbanks Head Start; has served as a member of the Alaska Federation for Community Self Reliance, the Governor's Child Care Advisory Board and the Office of Child Advocacy; elected to the House of Representatives in 1982, 1984 and 1986; currently serves as Co-chair of the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee and member of the Labor and Commerce Committee and the Children's Caucus.

Ms. Lare

Educated in Alaska, California and Virginia in the fields of public administration, child development administration and political science; involved with the National Association of State Directors of Child Development, Kids Corps, and the Child Care Connection; currently employed as the Child Care Coordinator for the Department of Community and Regional Affairs.

Kayleen Lowe

Educated in California, Utah and Alaska in anthropology and nursing; currently serves as Executive Director of Lifeline Alternatives, Inc., which provides alternatives to hospitalization and institutionalization for medically fragile/

technology dependent infants and children; has been involved in numerous organizations related to health care and nutrition, mental health, education for children with special needs, and foster care and placement.

Patty Meritt

Educational background in child development; has been involved in early childhood and child care programs since 1973; is currently the Executive Director of Play N Learn, Inc., in Fairbanks, which operates three child care centers and has also operated child care programs in California; currently serves as President of the Fairbanks Association for the Education of Young Children and is the Treasurer for KIDPAC.

Barbara Miklos

Educated in Colorado, Missouri and Alaska in health administration and education; currently employed as Executive Director of the Department of Public Safety's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; has been employed as a Health Systems Specialist and Health Planning Coordinator for the State of Alaska; was a consultant for Akeela House and coordinated a task force to plan for the provision of in-patient mental health services at Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital.

Dianne Olsen

Educated in Washington in society and justice and is an attorney; was formerly in private practice and is currently employed as an Assistant Attorney General supervising the Human Services Section in the Department of Law.

Judy Rich

Educated in California, Oregon and Alaska in the educational field; has been a classroom teacher of English and Remedial Reading; is currently involved with Tough Love, the Alaska Juvenile Crime Commission, and Victims for Justice; primarily involved with issues related to runaways, castaways and homeless youth.

Peter Scales, Ph.D.

Educated in New York, with doctoral training in Child and Family Studies; currently employed as Executive Director of Family Connection in Anchorage; has served on numerous boards and commissions statewide and nationally; authored over 80 books, articles and other publications related to child and family issues; chaired prevention committee of Anchorage Runaway and Homeless Youth Task Force, served on Anchorage School District Corporal Punishment Task Force, and Health Education Curriculum Committee. Served as Commission Vice Chair and Chair.

Niesje Steinkruger

Educational background in secondary education and history; an attorney employed as an Assistant Public Defender and formerly as an Assistant Attorney General and with private firms, involved primarily with juvenile and family law; serves on the Juvenile Justice and Family Services Advisory Committee, the Fairbanks Child Sexual Abuse Task Force and the National Association of Counsel for Children. Served as Commission's first Chair.

Fran Ulmer

Educated in Wisconsin in the fields of political science and economics and is an attorney; served as Mayor of the City and Borough of Juneau from 1983 to 1985 and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1986; currently serves as Chair of the House State Affairs Committee and is a member of the Judiciary Committee and the Children's Caucus; has been employed as the Director of the Division of Policy Development and Planning for the State of Alaska; previously served as Chair of the U.S. Conference of Women Mayors, on the State Board of the League of Women Voters, the Salvation Army and was Honorary Chair of the 1986 March of Dimes.

Public Testimony:

Following are the number of hours of public testimony and the number of people who testified before the Commission:

Date	Meeting	Hours of Testimony	People Testifying
June 12-13	Commission	1	19
July 9-10	Child Care Committee	1.5	16
July 10-11	Youth Committee	1	7
Aug. 8	Commission	3	39
Aug. 27-28	Child Care Committee	1.5	21
Sept. 9-10	Youth Committee	8.5	75
Sept. 17-19	Youth Committee	2	40
Sept. 25	Child Care Committee	3	22
Oct. 1	Child Care Committee	3	11
Oct. 5-6	Child Care Committee	1.5	9
Oct. 19-20	Commission	4	53
Nov. 9-10	Youth Committee	1	12
Nov. 18	Child Care Committee	1	8
Nov. 19-20	Commission	2.5	25
Dec. 9-11	Commission	3	25
	TOTAL	37.5	383

Commission Meetings:

The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth met the following dates between June and December, 1987, the time during which this report was written:

Body	Dates	Location
Commission:	June 12-31	Juneau
	Aug. 8	Fairbanks
	Oct. 19-20	Anchorage
	Nov. 19-20	Anchorage
	Dec. 9-11	Anchorage
	Jan. 19-20	Juneau
Child Care Committee:	July 9-10	Anchorage
	Aug. 7	Fairbanks
	Aug. 27-28	Anchorage
	Sept. 25	statewide public hearing
	Oct. 1	Southeast public hearing
	Oct. 5-6	Anchorage
	Nov. 18	Anchorage

Body	Dates	Location
Youth Committee:	July 10-11	Anchorage
	August 7	Fairbanks
	Sept. 9-10	statewide public hearing
	Sept. 17-18	Anchorage
	Oct. 7	statewide public hearing
	Nov. 9-10	Anchorage

Commission Activities and Participation:

The following lists, by month, meetings, conferences, workshops, trainings, seminars, etc. in which Commission members participated or at which they represented the Commission:

JUNE:

Conference of the Association of School Superintendents: John Antonnen, Annie Calkins.

Meeting of the Cabinet of Professional Associations: Annie Calkins.

Meeting of the Alaska State Writing Consortium: Annie Calkins.

Meeting of the Child Advocacy Network: Judy Rich.

Planning meeting, Anchorage Covenant House: Sen. Josephson, Judy Rich, Peter Scales.

Surgeon General's Conference on Family-Centered, Community-Based, Coordinated Care for Children with Chronic Illnesses and Other Disabilities: Kayleen Lowe.

Visit to the Crippled Children's Association Day Care Facility, Wanganui, New Zealand: Kayleen Lowe.

"STD: Check It Out" program review, Ministry of Health, New Zealand: Kayleen Lowe.

JULY:

Visits to Juneau child care centers: Rep. Ulmer.

Visit to the Asthma Society of Auckland's Children's Asthma Program, Auckland, New Zealand: Kayleen Lowe.

AUGUST:

Meeting of the Fairbanks Child Care Providers Association: Ms. Lare.

Visits to child care centers, Fairbanks: Child Care Committee.

Meetings with Juneau child care providers: Rep. Ulmer.

Dram-edy Workshop: Sen. Josephson.

Kapulani Preschool Parenting Training Project, Oahu, Hawaii: Kayleen Lowe.

Meeting of the Perinatal Association of Alaska: Kayleen Lowe.

Meeting of the Special Education Service Agency: Kayleen Lowe.

SEPTEMBER:

Joint meeting of the Governor's Council on Vocational Education and the State Job Training Partnership Coordinating Council: Peter Scales.

WIC Annual Meeting: Peter Scales.

Bilingual/Bicultural Education Coordinators Institute: John Antonnen, Annie Calkins, Shirley Covington, Ms. Lare, Kayleen Lowe.

Meeting of Volunteers for Youth At-Risk: Sen. Josephson.

Meeting for Participants in State Early Childhood Initiatives, National Association of State Boards of Education: Annie Calkins.

Meeting of the League of Women Voters: Rep. Ulmer.

Meeting of the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council: Kayleen Lowe.

Hearings on Anchorage Municipal Health Plan: Kayleen Lowe.

Hearings on State Child Care Regulations: Kayleen Lowe.

ACCESS Alaska, Family Issues Conference: Kayleen Lowe.

Special Hearing of the Federal Office of Special Education, Audit of State Education Programs: Kayleen Lowe.

Presentation to Child Care Connection: Kayleen Lowe.

KIDPAC Meeting: Kayleen Lowe.

KENI Radio Talk Show: Kayleen Lowe, Peter Scales.

Conference of Theta Omicron Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the National Honor Society of Nursing: Kayleen Lowe.

Seventh Annual Pediatrics Conference, Presentation by Dr. Richard Krugman on the Sexual Abuse of Children: Kayleen Lowe.

OCTOBER:

Annual Conference of the Child Welfare League of America: Ms. Lare.

Public Hearing: Upper Mat-Su Valley and Wasilla: Shirley Covington, Ms. Lare.

Conference of the Alaska Association for Community Education: Ms. Lare, Kayleen Lowe.

National Juvenile Justice Conference, Boston: Sen. Josephson.

Workshop on the Medical Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect: Blanche Brunk.

Meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Northwest Region: Peter Scales.

Parents Meeting, Juneau Montessori School: Rep. Ulmer.

Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, Youth and Elders' Conference: Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth.

Meeting of the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council: Kayleen Lowe.

Meeting of the Alaska Women's Commission: Kayleen Lowe.

Alaska Vocational Education Conference: Blanche Brunk.

Meeting of the State Board of Education: Blanche Brunk, Annie Calkins, Reggie Joule, Rep. Koponen, Patty Meritt, Niesje Steinkruger.

Visit to Covenant House, New York: Sen. Josephson.

Public Hearing: Nelson Island and Scammon Bay High Schools: Sen. Binkley, Clara Kelly, Kayleen Lowe.

Presentation to the Family Law Section, Alaska Bar Association: Niesje Steinkruger.

NOVEMBER:

Conference of the National Association of State Directors of Child Development: Ms. Lare.

Meeting of the Matanuska Valley Child Protection Team: Shirley Covington.

Meeting of the Alaska State School Boards Association: John Antonnen, Blanche Brunk, Peter Scales.

Fairbanks Mayor's Task Force on Children

and Youth: Patty Meritt, Niesje Steinkruger.

Meeting of the State Board of Education: Annie Calkins, Peter Scales, Ms. Lare, Dianne Olsen.

Meeting of the Alaska Municipal League: Peter Scales.

Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Chicago: Ms. Lare, Kayleen Lowe.

Alaska School Administrators Conference: John Antonnen.

Siberian Medical Research Conference: Kayleen Lowe.

Teen Pregnancy Workshop: Rep. Collins, Judy Rich.

Seventh Annual Statewide Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Symposium: Reggie Joule, Kayleen Lowe, Judy Rich.

Visit to the Lee Street Shelter: Sen. Josephson.

Presentation of National Teacher's Awards: Sen. Josephson.

Meeting of Standing Together Against Rape (STAR): Sen. Josephson.

"Public Official in the Classroom" Program: Sen. Josephson, Rep. Ulmer.

Visit to Lekotek Toy Lending Library, Compuplay, and Pre-School Mainstreamed Programs, Evanston, Illinois: Kayleen Lowe.

Foster Care Hearings, Department of Health and Social Services: Kayleen Lowe.

DECEMBER:

National Forum for Youth At-Risk, Washington, D.C.: John Antonnen, Sen. Josephson.

ON-GOING:

Alaska Teen Pregnancy Task Force: Peter Scales.

Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children: Ms. Lare.

Child Care Connection Board meetings: Ms. Lare.

ARCO Dependent Care Task Force: Ms. Lare.

Tri-Department Committee: Blanche Brunk, Annie Calkins, Ms. Lare.

Fairbanks Directors' Association: Patty Meritt.

Fairbanks Association for the Education of Young Children: Patty Meritt.

Governor's Council on Handicapped and Gifted: Ms. Lare, Kayleen Lowe.

Postsecondary Education Commission: Sen. Josephson.

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Secretarial Services: Carla Dedera, Executive Secretary; Annemarie Barnack, Secretary; Janice Harmon, Secretary.

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The following is a list of basic sources used in writing this report. A list of specific references for all facts cited is available on request.

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